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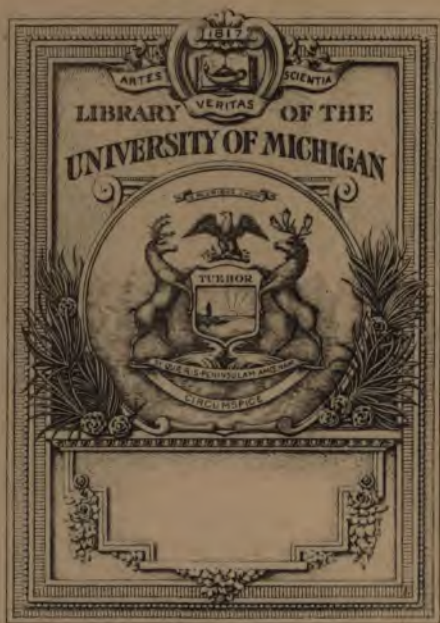
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AMERICAN LITERATURE

BY

LEON KELLNER

Professor in the University of Czernowitz

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN
BY
JULIA FRANKLIN

WITH A PREFACE
BY
GUSTAV POLLAK

GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
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PREFACE

In his "Geschichte der Nordamerikanischen Literatur," published at Leipzig a year ago, Professor Leon Kellner undertook to acquaint Germans, in brief outline, with the characteristic features of the literature of our country. The verdict pronounced on the two little volumes by the press was so favorable that an English translation, for the benefit of American readers, has seemed justifiable. The author's knowledge of his subject, his broad outlook, and his incisive and independent judgments will, it is hoped, commend themselves to audiences able to compare his methods with literary canons generally accepted in this country and in England.

It had been intended to submit the English version to Professor Kellner's scrutiny, but the exigencies of the European war have made this impossible. The University of Czernowitz, in the Austrian crown land of Bukowina, where Doctor Kellner has filled the chair of English philology and literature since 1904, is closed, the

town itself during the last few months having been alternately occupied by the Russians and Austrians. I have attempted to learn the whereabouts of Professor Kellner, but have so far been unsuccessful. When I met him last summer in Vienna, shortly before the outbreak of the war, he spoke, with all the warmth of his enthusiastic nature, of his hope of visiting our country. Since then the fates have interfered with all his plans.

In accordance with Professor Kellner's general views on the subject, as gathered in my talks with him, I have permitted myself to suggest to the publishers of the present work the advisability of omitting the concluding portion of the book, which consisted in the main of a rapid survey of writers not elsewhere treated by the author, and was supposed to bring out the characteristics of the various states. In doing so, I have felt that I was but carrying out Doctor Kellner's intentions, since he expressed to me his earnest wish to make any changes in proof which were in the direction of greater accuracy in detail, and also requested me to indicate what, in my opinion, had better be omitted. It may likewise be proper to mention that Kellner's vivid characterizations of New England life have

been left untouched, even where the reader must make allowance for the fact that the conditions upon which the author comments are rather those of a bygone time than of the present day.

It will be seen that Professor Kellner's volume is not a history of American literature in any exhaustive sense. This he could not have written within the limits which he set himself, but he has succeeded in doing what no German writer before him has ever attempted—that is to say, in tracing briefly the main currents of our literature, in placing before the reader vivid sketches of our great literary figures outlined against an ample historical and philosophical background, and in introducing a mass of minor writers the characterization of whom, if only in a few rapid strokes, gives color and animation to the whole picture. American letters have hitherto received but scant justice at the hands of German scholars. Only a very few literary historians, such as Brunnemann, Knortz, and Engel, have aimed at giving a survey of the general aspects of the subject, while scholars like Hermann Grimm and Anton Schönbach have contented themselves with describing to their countrymen some one outstanding literary figure, such as Emerson and Hawthorne.

Narrow as is the compass of Professor Kellner's work, we find in his pages characterizations of our literary celebrities whose substantial accuracy will not be questioned. They disclose remarkable familiarity not only with our literature but with our historic past. In accordance with what seems to be a wise plan, Emerson, Lowell, Whittier, above all Holmes, among the New England writers; Cooper, Bret Harte, Mark Twain, Walt Whitman, Henry James, among different surroundings, are singled out for full, adequate, and picturesque treatment; the foreign note here and there observable but emphasizes the writer's individual point of view. Lesser authors appear in becoming perspective, though by no means in shadowy outlines. Even where his judgment is at variance with current criticism there is a refreshing outspokenness, as in his plea for greater justice to the literary ability of Harriet Beecher Stowe than is commonly accorded to it. Throughout, we have the feeling that the author must be ranked with those writers who, as Lessing says, "write not merely to show their wit and scholarship, but who have in mind the best and most enlightened of their time and their country, and consider only that worthy of being

put down which pleases and appeals to them." The German reader for whom Professor Kellner indited his appreciations of our great writers has through him learned to know in Holmes and Emerson true classics—those who, in Sainte-Beuve's phrase, have enriched the human mind and really added to its treasures.

The attention which Professor Kellner bestowed on these writers is the outgrowth of a deeply rooted interest in New England life. He understands every intellectual and emotional phase of the New England character, widely as his temperament differs from that of the Puritan. In a letter now before me he says: "The strongest impression of my youth was an almost ascetic simplicity of life practised by my parents and all my relatives. And this way of living was not forced upon us by necessity, but was the result of conviction. From childhood I had acquired, through precept and example, puritanic habits of thought and puritanic conduct. You may perhaps learn, from my little book on North American literature, how deeply I sympathize with the Scottish and New England nature."

A few data concerning Professor Kellner's past will not be out of place here. Born of Jewish

parents at Tarnow, Galicia, in 1859, he was early initiated into Hebraic studies, and he has retained his interest in Jewish history and the critical interpretation of the Bible throughout life. After attending lectures on the classics in the University of Vienna, he devoted himself to the comparative study of languages, taking courses in Gothic and Old-High German under Richard Heinzel, and in Anglo-Saxon under Schipper and Brandl. These preparatory steps led to a journey, in 1888, to England, where he spent a year in arduous and fruitful work. He published for the Early English Text Society Caxton's "Blanchardyn and Eglantine," with an introduction on the syntactic peculiarities of the text which attracted the attention of scholars. In 1890 he became Privat-Dozent in English philology in the University of Vienna, a position which he subsequently exchanged for the full professorship at Czernowitz. Asked by the firm of Macmillan to furnish a history of English syntax, Kellner produced his "Historical Outlines of English Syntax" (1892), which has passed through many editions, and is still used as a textbook in English and American universities. In 1905 Doctor Kellner edited, together with Henry Bradley, the standard

"Historical Outlines of English Accidence" of the late Richard Morris. While in England he came into contact with the members of the Fabian Society, more particularly with William Archer and Graham Wallas, and his interest in English literature assumed a new direction through acquaintance with the social currents and the tendencies of English life.

Doctor Kellner revisited England regularly during the following years, widening the circle of his British friends and laying the foundation of his work on English literature, which was published in 1909 at Leipzig, under the title of "Die Englische Literatur im Zeitalter der Königin Viktoria." It is a study of great value, and particularly happy in its descriptions of the principal intellectual movements that gave the Victorian age its peculiar significance. The chapters on John Stuart Mill and the Utilitarians, on John Henry Newman and the Oxford Movement, on George Eliot, Ruskin, and Carlyle, written in a style of great animation, as well as his account of the hundreds of minor writers mentioned, if only by slight touches, bear testimony to the writer's intimate knowledge of his subject. It was easy to discern in the occasional references to Emerson, Holmes,

Poe, etc., that interest in American literature of which the present volume is the result.

Within the last few years Professor Kellner has returned to a favorite subject of his early years—the textual study of Shakespeare in both the quartos and folios. By his close scrutiny of Elizabethan manuscripts in the London Record office and in the British Museum he has acquired a rare palæographic knowledge of Shakespeare's time, and it may be confidently expected that his emendations and conjectures concerning the poet's text, to be published under the auspices of the Vienna Academy of Sciences, will prove an unusually valuable addition to Shakespeare literature.

GUSTAV POLLAK.

New York, April 13, 1915.

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AMERICAN LITERATURE

CHAPTER I

THE CHARACTER OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

1. AMERICAN HISTORY AND AMERICAN LITERATURE

THE contrast between word and deed, between experience and representation, is borne in upon us with striking force in comparing the history of the United States with its literature. No people on earth cherished higher aspirations than the band of seekers for freedom who, in the early part of the seventeenth century, embarking in a tiny vessel, bade a tearful adieu to their English home; and what has been accomplished, even though it bear no comparison with what was hoped for, is that marvelous achievement, the American Republic, with its gigantic power and an industrial development unexampled in history. The *Mayflower*, which put to sea in the fall of 1620, counted a hundred souls; forty-one men landed in December on the rocky coast of

Plymouth. After the first pitiless winter on the inhospitable soil of the New World, the little company was almost swept away by disease; of the forty-one Argonauts only seven were able to continue the struggle against the elements; and the descendants of this little band have in the space of 250 years exterminated the natives, assimilated the French and Dutch, driven back the Spaniards, and—most difficult of all their Herculean tasks—thrown off the yoke of the mother country.

When has human will accomplished anything so great in so brief a space? Do not all heroic acts of ancient and medieval history shrink into insignificance by the side of this miracle?

We seek in vain, however, for an epic that glorifies those great deeds; for a historical production that does justice to those conquerors and pathfinders of heroic proportions. The first settlers, who subjugated the land with musket and plow, were fully conscious of the greatness of their work, and efforts were not lacking to commemorate the extraordinary happenings in written recitals. William Bradford, one of the patriarchs of the *Mayflower* and member of the first Puritan settlement, wrote

"History of the Plymouth Plantation";* the enterprising Captain John Smith, to whom Virginia and all the other Southern States owe their origin, depicted, in a sustained style appropriate to the circumstances, his own adventures,† nor did the astonishment aroused by the unprecedented happenings on the soil of the new Colchis fail to be voiced in verse. But the forefathers did not go beyond dry, faltering reports, and their descendants have even to this day found no literary expression for the heroic. Neither the verse of Longfellow nor the prose of Hawthorne rises to the height of the subject.

And the Americans were destined to have yet another heroic age: the more peaceful conquest of the territory beyond the Ohio, toward the middle of the nineteenth century; then the conflict for the emancipation of the blacks, of 1861–1865.

All Americans who took part in the great migration to the West or participated in the Civil War were deeply stirred by their experiences and feel that they belong to a heroic

*William Bradford, "Journal, The History of Plymouth Plantation, 1630–1649," in facsimile, with introduction by J. A. Doyle, London, 1896.

†John Smith, "New England's Trials," London, 1622. Rochester, N. Y., and London (American and Colonial Tracts), 1897.

age. But how tame does their language sound when they attempt to give their feelings poetic expression! Joaquin Miller, really Cincinnatus Hiner Miller (born in 1841), who created a great sensation with his "Songs of the Sierras," depicts in more than one poem, with temperament and poetic swing, the progress of the tens of thousands to the West; but how petty, how inadequate, are these productions, measured by the immensity of the phenomenon! And just as little have the hundreds of ballads of Northern and Southern poets succeeded in worthily perpetuating the Civil War in the memory of their countrymen.

It is evident that American literature lags infinitely far behind American history.

Various causes may be assigned for this disparity; it has not as yet been quite adequately explained. The generations that preceded Cooper and Irving, it is often said, had their hands too full, were too overburdened with their daily tasks, to turn their thoughts to the luxury of literary presentation or creation. But that is far from the truth. In periods of the greatest stress, under the most adverse circumstances, pools of ink were wasted upon theological hairsplitting; the poorest farmers

found leisure enough to read the confused mass of sermons and polemical treatises, which would not be stomached to-day, that originated in the colonies.

It is said that the youthful settlements were dependent in literary matters and drew upon the mother country exclusively for their poetic needs. This statement is not apposite either. When has the craving for artistic expression ever been daunted by the fear of recognized models? Anna Bradstreet, the wife of a farmer and the mother of eight children, found time and strength amid the overwhelming daily duties of her hard life to fill four hundred octavo pages with her verse! All these hewers of wood and drawers of water, so grudgingly dealt with by Fate, were ready with speech and pen; many of them had an ear attuned to harmony and loved rhythm and rhyme.

One explanation alone holds good: absorption in God seems incompatible with the presentation of mankind. The God of the Puritans was in this respect, too, a jealous God who brooked no sort of creative rivalry. The inspired moments of the loftiest souls were filled with the thought of God and his designs; spiritual life was wholly dominated by solicitude re-

garding salvation, the hereafter, grace; how could such petty concerns as personal experiences of a lyric nature, the transports or the pangs of love, find utterance? What did a lyric occurrence like the first call of the cuckoo, elsewhere so welcome, or the first sight of the snowdrop, signify compared with the last Sunday's sermon and the new interpretation of the old riddle of evil in the world? And apart from the fact that everything of a personal nature must have appeared so trivial, all the sources of secular lyric poetry were offensive and impious to Puritan theology. For everything that was natural, that smacked of the creature, stood in the way of sanctification, of elevating one's self to God.

Representation of mankind in an epic or, still worse, in a dramatic form, totally violated the Puritanic spirit, which was saturated with the Old Testament abhorrence of the imitation of anything in the heavens or on the earth, in the air or on the waters.

This explanation is pertinent as far as the North is concerned—from Maine to Delaware. But the Southern States—Virginia, Maryland, Carolina? We are confronted here by an open question.

But one thing is an established fact: up to the

close of the eighteenth century America had no belletristic literature.

And what followed is at first a great disappointment: the first narrators, male and female, give imitations of European fashions! A few women, like Susanna Haswell Rowson and Hannah W. Forster, sing of love, seduction, and broken hearts, in the style of Richardson; some men, like Royal Tyler and Hugh Henry Brackenbridge, follow in the path of Smollett. And even a writer so highly gifted as Charles Brockden Brown was satisfied with transplanting to American soil the blood-and-thunder style of tale which had been domesticated in England by Walpole ("The Castle of Otranto"), Lewis ("The Monk"), Anne Radcliffe ("The Mysteries of Udolpho").

The faculty of poetic portrayal of one's immediate surroundings is, as literary history teaches us, the last to be acquired by individuals and nations; the Americans did not develop it until the nineteenth century.

The American nation did not become conscious of the distinctive character of its literature until long after it had gained its independence. And the outside world, which, as a rule, confirms our own estimate of ourselves, could

not for a long time make up its mind to believe in a distinctive American literature.

It is only the historians of the nineteenth century that reflect the greatness of the events from which modern America sprang. If glowing enthusiasm and unswerving faith alone could invest a prose creation with the immortality of poesy, George Bancroft's "History of the United States" would be the epic of the North American Republic. And the efforts of the later historians, such as Francis Parkman's "The Oregon Trail," his most personal book, and "France and England in America," his life work, or John Fiske's "Beginnings of New England" and "The American Revolution," are imbued with the same spirit that animated Bancroft.*

2. RELATION OF AMERICAN TO ENGLISH LITERATURE

The relation of American to English literature was represented on the part of the English, up to the middle of the nineteenth century, in a way to make it appear as if all the poetic

*When one surveys the imposing series of historians—Bancroft, Prescott, Motley, Parkman, Henry Adams, Justin Winsor, Edward Channing, John Fiske, McMaster, Woodrow Wilson, James Ford Rhodes—one would think that American historical writing had absorbed all the epic genius of America.

and prose writings produced in America were merely imitations of English models; owing to indignation at such depreciation and to a natural enough spirit of opposition, the Americans were somewhat inclined to deny that their literature was in any way dependent upon England. In reality, to an unprejudiced eye the matter is perfectly plain. Until the revolt of the colonies from the mother country, all American literary efforts were simply offshoots of the English stem, as were the colonies themselves. Just as the colonists wear English cloth, eat off English plates, build their houses with English bricks,* so do their theologians, their statesmen, their publicists, their poets, write in the language of the old home, adhere to the forms and rhythms, the traditions and tacit understandings, of the old literature. Every author is intent upon approaching the English models as closely as possible, upon committing no offence against the purity of the language, above all is he careful not to allow any Americanism to escape him. Benjamin Franklin wrote to Hume: "I hope, with you, that we shall always in America make the best English of this Island our standard," and to the lexicographer, Noah

*G. R. Carpenter, "Whittier," p. 7.

Webster: "I cannot but applaud your zeal for preserving the purity of our language."*

At the close of the eighteenth century, political independence having been achieved, there is a natural stirring of pride among writers, and a craving for self-reliance makes itself distinctly felt. But it does not materialize into action. On the contrary, stress is laid upon showing the world that now, as ever, the new land keeps pace in purity of speech and in elegance of style with the mother country. Such is—to name only the chief representatives—evidently the aim and the trend of thought of Washington Irving and Longfellow. Both are proud of introducing American matter into literature, of applying American local color in abundant measure; but as to form, they adhere strictly to tradition.

Many years after the Declaration of Independence it was still the highest praise that

*C. Alphonso Smith, "Die Amerikanische Literatur," Berlin, 1912, p. 4. Charles Whibley lauds the purity of the present American literary language also: "American slang knocks in vain for admission into American literature. . . . It has no part in the fabric of the gravely written language. Men of letters have disdained its use with a scrupulousness worthy of our own eighteenth century. The best of them have written an English as pure as a devout respect for tradition can make it . . . If you contrast the English literature of to-day with the American, you will find differences of accent and expression so slight that you may neglect them." *Ibid.*, p. 98.

could be accorded an American author that he emulated his English model so successfully that one might exclaim: "It could be taken for the work of an Englishman."

When Bryant's "Thanatopsis" appeared, people were carried away by the poem—because they were reminded of Wordsworth, Keats, and Shelley. In fact, the Greek word itself—an arbitrary coinage of Bryant's, as Epipsychidion was a coinage of Shelley's—indicates an English model, and the rhythm of English blank verse was ringing in the ears of the American.*

The fame of Washington Irving was based upon his being a reminder of Addison, and it was said of Cooper—with great injustice and greatly to his annoyance—that he was the American Scott.

Lowell may be regarded as the first American literary man of culture, taste, esprit, and creative force, who rebelled against this self-imposed servitude and asserted the right of Americans to their own individuality in language and style. "A Fable for Critics," which appeared in the

*American histories of literature point to Wordsworth as Bryant's teacher. That is not to be disputed; but "Thanatopsis" reminds one of Keats, not of Wordsworth. If one compares the first verses of the American with the opening lines of "Endymion," he will be surprised at the resemblance of the melody.

revolutionary year 1848, embodies a veritable declaration of independence of American literature.

And how did the world outside of America and England feel toward American authorship? The first American writer to become famous throughout Europe was Benjamin Franklin; the first to be read by all Europe was James Fenimore Cooper; the first that convinced all Europe of the existence of an American literature was Nathaniel Hawthorne. Franklin owed his fame to a successful political mission and to the invention of the lightning-rod; otherwise his homely, Philistine wisdom would hardly have found an audience beyond the narrow limits of his native land. In Cooper's Leatherstocking Tales what told was the new subject-matter, the strange world of primeval forest and prairie. It was in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter" that the work of a master of narrative on American soil was first recognized; the year 1850 is the natal year of the American novel, in the highest significance of that term, as measured by European standards. Hawthorne's work has its place by the side of "Père Goriot" and "The Newcomes," by the side of "Adam Bede" and "Anna Karenina."

Thenceforth the relation to England becomes wholly different—friendlier, more intimate. There is no longer any hatred of English literature, because there is no longer the fear of the schoolmaster's rod; from the day that England renounces her untenable right of guardianship, both nations, English and American, become aware of the true historic relation between American and English literature: it is the relation between branch and tree.

3. THE TWO PERIODS OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

The history of American literature in the nineteenth century—it is substantially only this that we have to take into account as belonging to the domain of belles-lettres—is divided into two unequal parts, of fundamentally different nature. The first extends to the close of the Civil War (1865), and is in the main the history of authorship as it was pursued in the northeastern section, particularly in the New England States; it is only in the second period, dating from the middle of the sixties, that we are concerned with the literature of the rest of the states, with American literature in general. During the first period intellectual America

has its centre of gravity in New England, or, to be more exact, in Massachusetts; Boston is the hub of the literary world.*

For all American idealists Boston was a sort of celestial city, somewhat as Jerusalem is for believers the world over.

"I want you to remember, my dear child," says an enthusiastic Pennsylvania doctor to his niece, "that in Boston you are not only in the birthplace of American liberty, but the yet holier scene of its resurrection. There everything that is noble and grand and liberal and enlightened in the national life has originated."†

In the forties there was gathered in Massachusetts that group of high-souled men, who, under the name of Transcendentalists, became world-renowned—Alcott, Emerson, Channing, Thoreau. And when the glory of the saints of Concord was eclipsed, there beamed the splendor of the poets, scholars, and humorists of Cambridge—Agassiz, Longfellow, Holmes, Lowell, Motley. That in itself suffices to explain why Massachusetts so long retained the leadership

*"Boston State House is the hub of the solar system," says Oliver Wendell Holmes in jest; this is often incorrectly quoted. "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," p. 125 (O. W. Holmes, Writings, 13 vols., Riverside Press).

†Howells, "A Chance Acquaintance," p. 21 (Boston, 1874).

in literary matters. The Civil War of 1861-1865 paved the way for the end of this hegemony. The victory achieved by New England over the South and West, politically and economically, was a defeat as regards the intellectual sphere: the year 1865 signifies the advent of the South and West into American literature. And such a wealth of talent appears upon the scene that New England resigns its former leadership without striking a blow, and is satisfied to maintain a modest place alongside the Southern and Western States. Thenceforth there is no hegemony in American authorship.

Whether it be an advantage or a drawback is a matter for inquiry, but the fact is indisputable that since Boston forfeited its privileges as the spiritual capital, press and literature in the United States lack a centre, guidance, models. Neither Washington nor New York occupies the place held by London and Paris in the English and French literary world. The press of Washington is provincial and that of New York does not play a genuinely metropolitan rôle for the nation.* The same is true, and in a far higher degree, of imaginative writing.

*See J. F. Muirhead, "The Land of Contrasts," p. 145, London, 1899.

Four characteristics mark the literature of the second period: description of environment; realistic depiction of details; the most copious use of dialect; and still a fourth thing that distinguishes the poetry and prose of this epoch from its predecessors—a great, if not the greatest, part of the imaginative literature is contributed by journalists to some newspaper or periodical. Not only do humorists like Alden, Anderson, Austin, Bailey, Barlow, Barr, etc., make their way from the editorial rooms, but poets of the rank of a Eugene Field, story-writers with the force of an Ambrose Bierce, the charm of an R. H. Davis, place their talents at the service of local journalism. This produces surprising effects in content, tone, form. Everything is of a sparkling lightness, a crisp freshness and gripping reality. Brevity is a prime requisite, brevity at any cost. And thus an art is developed which in a few stanzas exhausts the theme of an epic, which packs the substance of a novel within the limits of a feuilleton. A the highly developed social life of the fourteenth century favored the story, but at the same time prescribed for it certain limits conditioned by the receptive power of the auditors, and created that masterpiece of narrative art, the Ita

tale, so we find here, springing from altogether different conditions, essentially the same result. The imaginative talent of the Americans allowed itself to be harnessed to the car of journalism. To this circumstance we are indebted for the richness and the variety of the American short story.

4. THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

The contrast between the greatness of American history and the mediocrity of American literature becomes in a measure comprehensible if one compares the stuff of American imaginative writing with that of older literatures. In the face of an overpowering experience we are struck dumb, and psychologists have long been familiar with the phenomenon that it is not the totality of an event but some detached incident, some insignificant detail, that causes an outburst of tears or laughter, joy or lamentation. What things that robbed one of breath and speech confronted the European settlers in America! From a region deforested, cultivated, tame, long since cleared of beasts of prey, the emigrants were suddenly thrown into the midst of the wildness of the American prime-

val world. All the terrors of a night in the forest, which an Englishman had only thought of in an atavistic dream at Hallowe'en, assailed him here in colossal proportions; the remorseless, elemental cruelty of the conflict between living beings, which on English soil had been known only in a dim, almost prehistoric, past, was in the new environment a daily experience. And the clash of races, the volcanic, ever-threatening proximity of conquerors and conquered, the inhuman relation between masters and slaves—all this was too gigantic to be absorbed by the eyes of a poet, too stupendous to be molded by the imagination. Two hundred years and more had to elapse before the poets were capable of absorbing the nature around them and of grasping the countless problems arising from the medley of races, temperaments, and creeds.

The idea of making Indians the subject of imaginative creation was first conceived by foreigners, not by Americans. This accords with the thoughts just expressed: Voltaire and Chateaubriand were sufficiently distant from the aborigines not to allow themselves to be overpowered by the unprecedentedness of the phenomenon. But the Indians of those writ

are not drawn from life, and the interest aroused by them was due primarily not to the art of the portrayal, but to their philosophico-sociological aspect; the Indians were idealized in order to verify the doctrine of the innate goodness of human nature. "We savages are better people after all!" The American writer, Sarah Wentworth Morton, frankly expressed this in the double title of her Indian romance: "Quabi; or the Virtues of Nature." Cooper was the first to be stirred by the artistic impulse in depicting the Indians, and—as Indian research has shown—his work was based upon thorough knowledge. After the unexpected success of the Leatherstocking Tales many treated the inviting subject-matter, but none with Cooper's freshness and temperament.

The romance "Ramona," by Helen Hunt Jackson (1831-1885), is marked by a strong philanthropic flavor. While the cruelties against the negroes aroused the indignation and compassion of the entire world, the wrongs perpetrated against the Indians were wholly disregarded. The blacks were deprived of their freedom; the redskins of their soil and consequently of the means of existence. But the ill-treatment of the negroes was a thing of daily

observation in the midst of Christian civilization; the robbing of the Indians was carried on silently, at a distance from the great centres of population and the highways of commerce.

All the more laudable was the zealous advocacy of the woman who had the courage to intercede for the "savages," directly in the work "A Century of Dishonor" (1881) and indirectly in the romance "Ramona" (1884).

When Longfellow wrote "Hiawatha," he was by no means intent upon artistic observation and portrayal; his chief object was to fix the spirit, the real essence of the vanishing race. As accorded best with his purpose, he took his raw material from erudite literature, namely, Henry R. Schoolcraft's work, "Algic Researches."

The negroes had already been depicted by W. G. Sims in 1835, as well as by E. A. Poe in a number of sketches; but their real discovery for literature was the work of Harriet Beecher Stowe in 1852. Had "Uncle Tom's Cabin" never been written, who knows whether Joel Chandler Harris would have made such a loving study of the negroes?

A genuinely American subject is the psychology of the Demos, the problem of how its in-

dividual members are constituted and how they go about the task of making the democratic machine serviceable to their interests. The novel "Democracy," dating from 1880, of which Henry Adams, the historian, is the author; Paul Leicester Ford's "The Honorable Peter Sterling and What People Thought of Him" (1894); and Winston Churchill's more recent novel, "Mr. Crewe's Career," are excellent models of their kind.

Financial speculation, which in America transcends anything that has gone before, has frequently formed the theme of representation, but even Frank Norris (1870-1902) did not measure up to his theme. That highly gifted story-teller, whose early death was such a great loss to America and to the Anglo-Saxon world in general, had no political or moralizing purposes in view; it was art pure and simple that floated before his mental vision, art, it may be, of the Parisian formula of that time, but nevertheless art. He saw the endless wheatfields bounded only by the encircling sky, those veritable, inexhaustible gold mines, the last to be discovered in the Far West; he took a deep interest in the sowing and reaping; the immortal spirit of Mother Earth seized him like a revela-

tion, and he wrote "The Epic of the Wheat."* Feudal service, compulsory labor, negro slavery itself, were not so dreadful as the struggle described by Norris of the wheat-growers against the unescapable, crushing, octopus-arms of corruption.

*"The Octopus."—"The Pit."—The epic was conceived as a trilogy, but the author did not live to finish the third volume.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST PROSE WRITERS

1. THE name of Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), who enjoyed universal fame in an exalted sphere, has thus far stood the triple test of death, time, and totally changed conditions. To his countrymen he appears the most distinguished representative of the eighteenth century, despite such remarkable phenomena as Frederick II., Emperor Joseph, Voltaire; to us outsiders he seems the embodiment of sound common sense, robust, middle-class morality, clear-sighted expediency, political efficiency, the spirit of the natural scientist—in brief, of all the qualities that are generally looked upon as Yankee characteristics. If not the greatest figure of the age of enlightenment, he stands among the greatest; and though his "Autobiography" does not rank as a classic outside his own country, though his popular wisdom does not enjoy the esteem among us of Hebel's "Schatzkästlein," for example, yet the pithiness, the indestructible

soundness of his prose, have sufficed to maintain for him, in Germany also, a high degree of popularity. The good-natured masterfulness in all his writings, which says quite clearly, "Poor humanity, I know you, but I love you all the same," constitutes the real salt of his humor, and it is this that keeps him fresh to the present day. Franklin, who by his incomparable diplomatic successes demonstrated in practice that he eminently understood how to deal with men, has bequeathed to us in his letters, in his "Poor Richard's Almanac," and in his proverbs, a veritable treasury of wise maxims—if one but knows how to read them. His oft-quoted letter of recommendation might profitably be committed to memory by every man in public life:

PARIS, 2 April, 1777.

Sir,

The bearer of this, who is going to America, presses me to give him a letter of recommendation, though I know nothing of him, not even his name. This may seem extraordinary, but I assure you it is not uncommon here. Sometimes, indeed, one unknown person brings another equally unknown, to recommend him; and sometimes they recommend one another! As to this gentleman, I must refer you to himself for his character and merits, with which he is

certainly better acquainted than I can possibly be. I recommend him, however, to those civilities which every stranger, of whom one knows no harm, has a right to; and I request you will do him all the good offices, and show him all the favor, that, on further acquaintance, you shall find him to deserve.

I have the honor to be, etc.,

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

Of his pithy sayings we cite a few examples:

He is ill clothed who is bare of virtue.

Beware of meat twice boiled, and an old foe reconciled.

The heart of a fool is in his mouth, but the mouth of a wise man is in his heart.

He that is rich need not live sparingly, and he that can live sparingly need not be rich.

He that waits upon fortune is never sure of a dinner.

A house without woman or firelight is like a body without soul or spirit.

Kings and bears often worry their keepers.

Light purse, heavy heart.

He's a fool that makes his doctor his heir.

Ne'er take a wife till thou hast a house (and a fire) to put her in.

To lengthen thy life, lessen thy meals.

He that drinks fast pays slow.

Franklin's short, popular pieces, which remind one most vividly of Engel's "Der Philosoph für die Welt" and of Peter Hebel's "Schatzkästlein," mentioned before, have been incorporated as *bagatelles* into the firm substance of American philosophy; some have furnished the English tongue with new expressions ("he has an axe to grind"; "you have paid too dear for your whistle"). With the parable of Jacques Montrésor, which is characteristic of Franklin's attitude as a man of the world as well as of his style, we shall conclude our brief sketch:

"An officer named Montrésor, a worthy man, was very ill. The curate of his parish, thinking him likely to die, advised him to make his peace with God, that he might be received into Paradise. 'I have not much uneasiness on the subject,' said Montrésor, 'for I had a vision last night which has perfectly tranquillized my mind.' 'What vision have you had?' said the priest. 'I was,' replied Montrésor, 'at the gate of Paradise, with a crowd of people who wished to enter, and St. Peter inquired of every one to what religion he belonged. One answered, "I am a Roman Catholic." "Well," said St. Peter, "enter, and take your place there among the Catholics." Another said he was of

the Church of England. "Well," said the Saint, "enter, and place yourself among the Anglicans." A third said he was a Quaker. "Enter," said St. Peter, "and take your place among the Quakers." At length, my turn being come, he asked me of what religion I was. "Alas!" said I, "poor Jacques Montrésor has none." "'Tis pity," said the Saint; "I know not where to place you; but enter nevertheless, and place yourself where you can."'"

2. Washington Irving (1783-1859) is famed among Americans, particularly among New Yorkers, as the author of "A History of New York by Diedrich Knickerbocker" (1809), that burlesque which in form is a reminder of the pseudonymous publications of Chatterton's time, while in substance it is not much more than the merry conceit of an original humorist, a mixture of harmless satire and effective caricature. Irving ostensibly discovers the unpublished writings of a Dutch investigator, Diedrich Knickerbocker, who busied himself with the history of the Dutch settlement of New Amsterdam, the New York of to-day, and he exercises the pious duty of an editor upon these literary remains. In the resulting book the heroic feats of the settlers are depicted as though

in a comic epic. The Americans have doubtless overrated this merry but not specially witty performance; understanding of the local allusions made it easier for them to seize all the points intended to be made by the writer. But the spirit of a great satirist hovers over the work, the spirit to which we owe the creation of Gulliver and the Lilliputians.

Among Europeans Irving is known chiefly through his "Sketch Book," which appeared ten years after the "History of New York." It consists of chats, sketches, tales, experiences, conceits, now fantastic, now sentimental, scarcely ever of any importance, but always most carefully elaborated.

The contents are as varied as would be the thoughts of a writer who travels leisurely from place to place, sojourns where he finds it agreeable, and sketches what strikes him. Most of the graceful pages originated in England, where Irving had a genial home with his brothers, and where he spent many years after 1815. He describes a visit to Roscoe, the historian, in Liverpool, chats about rural life in England, writes in elegiac tones about the royal poet of the "King's Quair," dreams in the hallowed spaces of Westminster Abbey, makes a detour to

Stratford-upon-Avon, tries in a number of sketches to fix the English spirit of Christmas, reflects upon the change of taste in literature, relates the poignant story of the widow and her son, jots down a characteristic of John Bull; and in the midst of all these commonplaces, as a side-issue as it were, he gives us those splendid productions, which may perhaps be termed the first examples of the American local tale—the tale of the soil—"Rip van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." The story of the indolent dreamer Rip, who, in order to escape from his Xantippe, wanders for days along the Hudson in the lonely gorges of the Catskill Mountains, and on his return to the village is not recognized by anybody and does not recognize any one himself, is familiar the world over; Rip van Winkle is a winged name like Falstaff or Tartuffe.

We can hardly understand to-day why the "Sketch Book" was so specially admired by Irving's contemporaries, why the rigorous critic of the *Edinburgh Review* praised it to the skies, why Byron learned it almost by heart; what is certain is that no other writer did as much to eradicate England's depreciation of everything American, on the one hand, and American

animosities against the mother country on the other. It is no exaggeration to say that his sketch of Westminster Abbey and of Stratford induced thousands of Americans to visit those hallowed spots.

Irving's productions after those first-fruits of his pen—"Bracebridge Hall," 1822; "Tales of a Traveller," 1824; "Life and Voyages of Columbus," 1828; "The Conquest of Granada," 1829; "The Companions of Columbus," 1831; "The Alhambra," 1832; "The Life of Oliver Goldsmith," 1849; "Mahomet and His Successors," 1850; "The Life of George Washington," 1855-1859—were intended almost exclusively for American readers. They were in part scholarly efforts in the style of the *Edinburgh Review;* they were certainly not European literature. He revealed to those of his countrymen to whom the fruits of research were not otherwise accessible the picturesque splendor of the Mohammedan world—orientalists and poets had done that for Europe many decades before.

3. James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851) is appreciated among us to-day chiefly by boys and girls, but about eighty years ago, and for a long time after, he was the most widely read author in the world. The inventor of the elec-

tric telegraph, Samuel F. B. Morse, said in the year 1833: "In every city of Europe that I visited, the works of Cooper were conspicuously placed in the windows of every bookshop. They are published, as soon as he produces them, in thirty-four different places in Europe. They have been seen by American travellers in the languages of Turkey and Persia, in Constantinople, in Egypt, at Jerusalem, at Ispahan."*

Cooper, who had passed his thirtieth year before he began to write, bequeathed to posterity a library of sixty-seven volumes; from the merciless winnower, Time, only five have issued as wheat,† the Leatherstocking Tales: "The Pioneers, or the Sources of the Susquehanna," 1823; "The Last of the Mohicans," 1826; "The Prairie, a Tale," 1827; "The Pathfinder, or the Inland Sea," 1840; "The Deerslayer, or the First War Path," 1841.

The chronology of these works demands the sequence given above; we find thus that the hero of the five novels, the hunter Natty Bumppo, was first pictured by Cooper in the years of his

*Th. Stanton, "A Manual of American Literature," 1909.

†Besides these the books that are read are "The Spy," 1821, and "The Pilot," 1823. The first-named novel has the War of Independence as its background; the second, in which Cooper turns to account his recollections of his service in the navy, portrays the adventures of John Paul Jones.

manhood and old age, until, through the insatiability of his readers, the successful author conceived the idea of adding a narrative of his youth. If one wishes to enjoy the whole prose poem, however, unconcernedly like a child, and to follow the hero from his beginnings to the close of his life, he must observe a different order in reading them: (1) "The Deerslayer," (2) "The Last of the Mohicans," (3) "The Pathfinder," (4) "The Pioneers," (5) "The Prairie."

It is not very difficult to understand the immense popularity of the Leatherstocking Tales and the fame of the writer in the first half of the nineteenth century. First and foremost, the longing for the dreamed-of golden age of primitive life met him halfway. The civilized world was not yet so far removed from the sentimental visions of Rousseau; sensitive souls still wept over Paul and Virginia; and even Chateaubriand's imitations elicited boundless admiration. For that generation, keyed to the glad tidings of a return to primitiveness, Natty Bumppo, a hunter living among the redskins, averse to all polish but imbued with the noblest humanity, was the embodiment of their ideal of a man who owes all to nature, nothing to civilization. Cooper, who was only moder-

ately gifted with the faculty of imaginative reproduction, endowed the hero of the Leather-stocking Tales very richly from the treasure-house of his own spiritual life; it is owing to this that of all Cooper's characters, Natty Bumppo most strongly produces the illusion of reality.

Cooper himself, as a member of a family of distinction, was deeply imbued with the prejudices of the modern social order. Observe, for example, how he prepares the reader, how he cajoles him, before he ventures to enlist his sympathies for the children of nature. He introduces the good-natured giant of the primeval forest, Henry March, with the apology that though, of course, not free from roughness such as a conflict with savage nature naturally produces, the grandeur of so splendid a stature prevented the man from appearing altogether "common"—that is, the man of the people may be forgiven his uncorrupted soul on account of his physical perfection.

But in his inmost being Cooper was a child of nature, an only half-tamed denizen of the woods—a survival in the midst of the conventions of a feeble time. His resistance to the constraint of the prevailing manners manifested itself even in his schooldays; and his innumer-

able feuds with the press and the public show that he could never completely adapt himself to the artificial social order—that is to say, he could never quite suppress his strong individuality for the sake of peace.

When a young fellow he was expelled from college; later, at the height of his fame, he incurred the displeasure of young America and then of the entire nation. And why? He had travelled in Europe and by his fearless criticism had attracted unfavorable attention. Upon his return home he wrote a work in which he held up the mirror to his countrymen. Whereupon all the papers and politicians fell upon him, and he endured ten years of the bitterest obloquy. This could only happen to a man who cannot accommodate himself to circumstances, who does not allow his convictions to be circumscribed, who must live his life in his own way. Hence his comprehension not only of Natty Bumppo, but likewise of the Indians. In comparison with the unquestioning self-righteousness which so generally characterizes the whites, Cooper's attitude toward the colored races is that of an unprejudiced philosopher. Leatherstocking, through whose lips Cooper expresses his views on the race question, says:

"God made us all, white, black, and red; and, no doubt, had his own wise intentions in coloring us differently. Still, he made us in the main, much the same in feelin's; though I'll not deny that he gave each race its gifts. A white man's gifts are Christianized, while a redskin's are more for the wilderness. Thus, it would be a great offence for a white man to scalp the dead; whereas it's a signal vartue in an Indian. Then, ag'in, a white man cannot amboosh women and children in war, while a redskin may."

The humanitarian sentiment that we are all descended from one father, in spite of all differences of race and conditions of life, is Cooper's profoundest conviction. And in sharing the life of his two Indian friends, Chingachgook and Uncas, Natty Bumppo does not show a trace of the superiority which characterizes the attitude of the white man toward the Indian. Just the contrary. It is upon this that the charge of idealizing the barbarous, inhuman Indians, so long held up against him, rests. Cooper from his childhood up was acquainted with a great number of Indians, half tamed, who possessed all the virtues which he depicts; and research has shown that though they indulged in scalping and were merciless in pursuit of their ene-

mies, they possessed many virtues—above all, hospitality and a spirit of self-sacrifice, not only for wife and child, but for a strange friend.

Against the male characters in Cooper's novel, "The Deerslayer," it might be objected that they are sophisticated and rectilinear, that they follow prescribed rules, as it were, in speech and action; that they are always, under all circumstances, the same. This does not apply to the women. Judith Hutter is a maiden instinct with life, with all the whims and capriciousness of a temperamental nature, consistent only in her inconsistency, a Cleopatra of the American forest, if it be permissible to compare the small with the great. Cooper has not a strong sense of humor, or he could not have failed to see how much of the comic he has involuntarily attached to the character of Hetty, otherwise so touching a figure. The unselfish, lovable, sensitive, deeply pious being is regarded and treated by her rude associates as feeble-minded precisely on account of those qualities. In reality, however, she is the only one in the romance who acts wisely, and the only one who displays any cleverness, in short, the only normally sensible person in the whole company. And this girl, pictured as such a naïve creature, says of herself every time she

does anything unusually clever: "But you know I am feeble-minded!"*

Was Cooper a poet?

Creative genius, the impulse and ability to portray people artistically, he possessed, as has been mentioned, only in a minor measure. But he possessed to a rare degree those attributes which are common to all original imaginative writers: a highly developed sensibility for all of nature's phenomena; the most acute, even if unconscious, power of observation, which seizes every detail; finally, the faculty of thinking in images. These advantages were enjoyed by Natty Bumppo, who obtained them from his creator, Cooper. Natty's hearing is so marvelous that he distinguishes the real cry of the hawk from the Indian's imitation, a nuance which often escapes the animals themselves. His eye discovers a trail which a hundred children of civilization have sought for hours in vain. The changing moods of woods and wilds in the Leatherstocking Tales are lyric masterpieces; these alone would entitle Cooper to the name of poet.

*See, for example, the eighteenth chapter.

CHAPTER III

AMERICAN POETRY

THE Puritan spirit which inspires the whole body of American literature, not excluding the humorists, is most clearly evidenced in the verses of Whittier, in the novels of Harriet Beecher Stowe; but Bryant also, and the host of minor poets, are essentially of the same type. A more penetrating insight into American imaginative writing, notably the productions of the Northeast, is impossible without a knowledge of what the Puritan spirit in America signified, what it stimulated in daily life, what it repressed, what it created, what it ruthlessly destroyed.

1. THE NATURE OF AMERICAN PURITANISM

Calvinism is the natural theology of the disinherited; it never flourished, therefore, anywhere as it did in the barren hills of Scotland and in the wilds of North America. The Calvinist feels himself surrounded by naught but

hostile powers; his life is a perpetual conflict from his very birth. The farmer, who has to keep up a constant struggle against untoward phenomena, against the refractory soil, against drought and frost, against caterpillars and a host of other insect plagues; who constantly sees his well-considered and most persistent efforts thwarted by laws whose operations he can never calculate in advance, and which give no evidence of consideration for his good intentions or compassion for his failures—he is naturally inclined to the belief from the outset that God, who created the world, is a well-meaning but unquestionably a rigorous, cold being who rules the world with some great purpose unknown to the inhabitants of the earth. The weal and woe of mankind may perhaps enter into the plan, and they may not. God, who, to other believers in Christianity, is a loving Father, is to the Calvinist a hostile Presence, threatening doom—unless he should be found worthy of grace. Who can know that he is so? And should he find no grace, he is doomed to everlasting perdition.

The famous Jonathan Edwards, the greatest Calvinist luminary on the soil of the New World, says in a sermon bearing the consoling

title of *Men Naturally God's Enemies:* "A natural man has a heart like the heart of a devil. . . . The heart of a natural man is as destitute of love to God as a dead, stiff, cold corpse is of vital heat." And in another sermon upon *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God:* "The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked . . . you are ten thousand times as abominable in his eyes as the most hateful and venomous serpent is in ours. . . . You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it. . . . If you cry to God to pity you, he will be so far from pitying you in your doleful case . . . that he'll only tread you underfoot; . . . he'll crush out your blood and make it fly and it shall be sprinkled on his garments so as to stain all his raiment. . . ."

What an effect this doctrine of terror had upon sensitive natures is described by one of the initiated, a minister's daughter.

"What have I not read and suffered at the hands of theologians? How many lonely hours, day after day, have I bent the knee in fruitless prayer that God would grant me this great,

unknown grace, for without it how dreary is life!

"We are in ourselves so utterly helpless—life is so hard, so inexplicable, that we stand in perishing need of some helping hand, some sensible, appreciable connection with God. And yet for years every cry of misery, every breath of anguish, has been choked by the theological proofs of theology—that God is my enemy, or that I am his; that every effort I make toward him but aggravates my offence; and that this unknown gift, which no child of Adam ever did compass of himself, is so completely in my own power that I am every minute of my life to blame for not possessing it." (Harriet Beecher Stowe, "Oldtown Folks," 1, page 256.)

For the poor, for the stepchildren of Nature and Fate, this creed was a most potent, because personal, truth. An enemy, not a loving Father, had given them their accursed existence, and thus it was a consolation to know that the favored, the lucky ones of this world, were advancing toward eternal damnation, while they, who were languishing in this life, would be the first in the life everlasting. The doctrine of election by grace, of a divine aristocracy is, as

the historian Bancroft once observed, the most exalted conceit of human pride. The needy said to the privileged classes: "You point to your fifteen ancestors? We, the elect, were appointed by God the aristocracy of the world from the beginning of creation. Whose nobility is more ancient?"

The farmers of New England, like the Scotch cotters of to-day, were extremely well versed in theology. Farmer Marvyn, as Harriet Beecher Stowe depicts him, tilled the soil with his own hands, but in his leisure hours and on Sundays he was an eager, thoughtful reader whose attention scarcely any production worthy of notice, in Biblical exegesis or theological lore in general, would escape. He did not read uncritically; his books were full of marginal notes of a polemical character. The sons—and daughters—followed this model, and independence of thought became thus the inalienable heritage of every Puritan.

The Puritanic way of observing the Sabbath made the Lord's day a torment instead of a recreation. Two illustrations from Alice Morse Earle's book, "The Sabbath in Puritan New England," will suffice:

"Jonathan and Susannah Smith were fined

5 s. for smiling during service." "Two lovers, John Lewis and Sarah Chapman, were accused of and tried for sitting together on the Lord's day under an apple tree."

Puritan New England, like Scotland in the more modern history of the British polity, constituted the steely point of the nation's spear. The hard, niggardly, refractory soil of the New England States has contributed to the peculiar mixture which is termed the American national character the elements to which it preëminently owes its qualities of endurance, of tenacity, of conquering force. Efficiency—"faculty" in the language of New England—is synonymous there with virtue; all the conceptions associated with the Greek *arete* and the Latin *virtus* become vivid to a Yankee of the old stamp on mention of the word "efficiency." To efficiency everything is possible, everything attainable; for efficiency there are no insurmountable obstacles, no impassable gulfs. And efficiency is "elected" to rule the weak and helpless, to force them into its service. Puritanic efficiency takes the lead in the American States as the Doric "virtue" vanquished the Ionic genius, as the barrenness of the Judaic chalk-cliffs brought under subjection the wealth and abundance of Samaria.

The ambition of all the gifted school-children of New England, even the poorest, turned toward a university education and literary renown. Harvard College was the new Jerusalem, the ideal of all aspiring youth. Benjamin Franklin and J. G. Whittier longed for that high aim without ever attaining it.

2. SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF PURITAN POETRY

All that made the settlers in New England irresistible—their intense religiosity, the unalterable conviction of their election, their modest wants and along with this a constant care for the morrow, their humbleness toward God and their inflexible pride toward man, their feeling for freedom and independence, their strong sense of justice—were distinguishing marks of these poets, genuine descendants of those Puritan forefathers. This or that one among them may on the surface have lifted himself above this Calvinist heritage; but in the blood, in marrow and muscle, the Puritan spirit, ineradicable, lives on. One should like to regard the freethinker, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and the naturalist, Oliver Wendell Holmes, as completely emancipated, but they themselves confess that they are subject to the Puritan

tradition.* What Bryant said of himself applies to the whole group: what they had seen and heard as children at home clung to their souls unto death.

That is the strongest side of their poetry. When they sing of liberty and equality their song is as irresistible as the sword of their ancestors. Bryant's ode, *The Antiquity of Freedom*, rises high above all the English odes of older or more modern times. To these poets the fight against the slavery of the Southern States was a matter of sacred earnestness, its most fundamental basis unselfish conviction; that is why of the countless poems written on behalf of the emancipation of the slaves those of the Puritan group alone have poetic content, the ring of genuine, personal feeling; such, for example, are Bryant's *Our Country's Call*† and *The Death of Slavery*,‡ *Expostulation*,§ *Massachusetts to Virginia*,¶ etc. And with this spirit of independence they did not shrink from turning against their own forefathers. Puritan

*Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Scarlet Letter." Oliver Wendell Holmes, "Over the Teacups."

†C. H. Page, "The Chief American Poets," p. 24.

‡Stedman, "An American Anthology," p. 66.

§Page, p. 262.

¶Page, p. 270.

poets and prose writers are never more indignant, never more powerful, than when they tell of the spiritual pride and the rage of persecution of the first settlers. This flaming wrath makes Whittier's *Cassandra Southwick** one of his most gripping poems.

A leading characteristic of the Puritan group of poets is the conviction of their election and divine consecration: they have, like Cædmon, the Saxon shepherd in Bede's legend, been inspired in order that they might announce what is high and holy to mankind. The calling of poet is to them, therefore, a high and holy calling, an unsought, onerous office like that of the prophets of old.†

Their love of freedom is intimately allied with pride in their American home, the home that their forefathers wrested from the wilderness, that they themselves wrung from the oppressor's hand. That is why the patriotic poetry of that circle flourished with such particular brilliance. Bryant's song of defiance, *Oh Mother of a Mighty Race*,‡ is an excellent example of this type of American lyric.

*Page, p. 267.

†"Bryant, The Poet," Page, p. 29. Emerson, *Merlin*, Page, p. 81.

‡Stedman, p. 62.

The energy and unrelaxing industry of the New England Puritans, bred of the ceaseless struggle with the most adverse conditions, and, coupled with these, the iron purpose—clear, triumphant—stamp their literature as well. Trifling talk, for the sake of talking, is not a thing for the Puritans; there is ever some purpose in view. Instruction, edification, amusement, persuasion—some effect is always aimed at. If a spirit as dreamy as Longfellow proclaims the doctrine "In the beginning was the deed," we may assuredly characterize this as a common trait of the Puritan group. The famous village blacksmith with his daily "Something attempted, something done" is the American ideal.

The poets of New England occupy a distinctive position in American literature, as does their special section among the other divisions of the United States. The states of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut were the real starting-point of the North American Republic, the chief seat of intellectual life, and the only ones—Virginia stands by itself in every respect —that can point to an old civilization and are fully conscious of this aristocracy. There are

probably not many families in England that have occupied the same house continuously since the third decade of the seventeenth century and can show an unbroken pedigree of three hundred years. Such, however, is the case in many farms of New England, for example in the home of the poet Whittier.

In feeling these Puritan lyrists remind one of the greatest writers of song*; Goethe's longing for peace found no profounder expression than is voiced in Longfellow's *Hymn to the Night.* What the Americans lack is the divine harmony which makes a poem a song. The music of verse is vouchsafed to hardly a single one of them. Bryant is the most melodious of the entire group, Emerson the least gifted with the sense of sound among them all.

That in English poetry less attention is paid to the purity of rhyme than in other languages, is a familiar fact; the so-called sight-rhymes like love and move, are and care, are a license to which even eminent talent resorts. But rarely

*The deepest, most genuine feelings of the Puritan poets are manifested in their lyrics. This is most clearly perceptible in the minor poets. James Gates Percival (1795-1856) was, in his most comprehensive and ambitious work, *Prometheus* (1820), an imitator of Byron and Shelley; in his lyric poems, on the contrary, his verse was of an independent, Puritanic character. His patriotic *New England* would alone be evidence enough that he belongs to that group.

do they appear in such disturbing abundance as with Emerson. The elegy on the death of his son (*Threnody*), so fraught with feeling and thought, is, therefore, to be read with the eye alone; to the ear dissonances like mourn—return, man—vain, are intolerable.

3. AMERICAN POETRY BEFORE BRYANT

William Cullen Bryant is designated by Englishmen as the first American poet, and the Americans are not disinclined to subscribe to that judgment. And since the poem *Thanatopsis*, upon which this judgment is based, appeared in 1817, that year is straightway designated as the natal year of American poetry. This sort of criticism and literary history presupposes iron-bound rules of literary æsthetics. For the present such do not exist for us. One cannot, therefore, go so far as to annihilate at a stroke the whole of the somewhat ample body of poetry before Bryant.

Even from the wholly Puritan period, shunned by the Muses and the Graces, there are many verses worthy of being revived.* The Puritan hymn, whose boldness and hard force

*W. B. Otis, "American Verse," 1625-1807, New York, 1909.

is a characteristic expression of American-Puritan art, dates from that sterile time.

Let children hear the mighty deeds
Which God performed of old,
Which in our younger years we saw,
And which our fathers told.

He bids us make his glories known,
His works of power and grace;
And we'll convey his wonders down
Through every rising race.

Our lips shall tell them to our sons,
And they again to theirs;
That generations yet unborn
May teach them to their heirs.

Thus shall they learn, in God alone
Their hope securely stands;
That they may ne'er forget his works,
But practise his commands.

It is not to be wondered that the Puritan spirit produced no worldly songs; for the joys of the cup, vernal breezes, love's rapture and pain, were tabooed as subjects for poetry. It is, on the contrary, a cause for astonishment that even the rigid discipline of New England was unable to kill the love song. One such,

gathered from the mouth of the people, has been set down by Irving Bacheller in "Eben Holden." Its rarity alone should justify its reproduction:

I was goin' t' Salem one bright summer day,
When I met a fair maiden a-goin' my way.
Oh, my fallow, faddeling fallow, faddel away.

An' many a time I had seen her before,
But I never dare tell 'er the love that I bore.
Oh, my fallow, etc.

"Oh, where are you goin', my purty fair maid?"
"Oh, sir, I am goin' t' Salem," she said.
Oh, my fallow, etc.

"Oh, why are you goin' so far in a day?
Very warm is the weather and long is the way."
Oh, my fallow, etc.

"Oh, sir, I've forgotten, I hev, I declare,
But it's nothin' to eat an' it's nothin' to wear."
Oh, my fallow, etc.

"Oho! then I hev it, ye purty young miss!
I'll bet it is only three words an' a kiss."
Oh, my fallow, etc.

"Young woman, young woman, oh, how will it dew
If I go see yer lover 'n bring 'em t' you?"
Oh, my fallow, etc.

"'Sa very long journey," says she, "I am told,
An' before ye got back they would surely be cold."
Oh, my fallow, etc.

"I hev 'em right with me, I vum an' I vow,
An' if you don't object I'll deliver 'em now."
Oh, my fallow, etc.

She laid her fair head all on to my breast,
An' ye wouldn't know more if I tol' ye the rest.
Oh, my fallow, etc.

Philip Freneau (1752-1832) of New York, whose ancestors emigrated from France at the time of the Huguenot persecution and found their way to America, was remarkably versatile and prolific, but very uneven in temper and inspiration. He wrote satires, polished occasional poems in the style of Prior and the Cavaliers, odes, fables, translations—everything that has been prejudicial to his memory. But who would hesitate, had the name of the author remained unknown, to ascribe such poems as *The Wild Honeysuckle* or *On the Ruins of a Country Inn** to one of the English poets of note of the eighteenth century?

The political satire, *McFingal*, by John

*Stedman, 3-8.

Trumbull (1752-1831), can creditably stand the test of comparison with its model, Butler's *Hudibras*, and the epic of Timothy Dwight (1752-1817), *The Conquest of Canaan*, was praised by Cowper.

If there were no lyrics and no epics, measured by the Greek standard, there was, at any rate, poetry. And the further we advance from the days of political nonage, the richer is the percentage of precious metals in the mass of dead lode. To be sure, Alexander Wilson is frankly prosaic, directly utilitarian. He sounds the praises of the feathered songster not only because it heralds the spring, but because it destroys the noxious canker-worm and caterpillar. George P. Norris sings of commonplace feelings in schoolboy verses, Peabody writes dull elegies, Prentice riots in a leaden plethora of words, Lydia Sigourney, so highly lauded in her time, is rhetorical, didactic, pompous. For that matter, America is, indeed, inclined to homely moralizing, as is evidenced by the long-lived admiration for Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy*.* The poem, *Home, Sweet Home*, which has immortalized the mediocre J. H. Payne

*Cf. Leon Kellner, "Die Englische Literatur im Zeitalter der Königin Viktoria," Leipzig, 1909, p. 369.

(1791-1852), is an illustration of that commonplace verse which even after Bryant's advent was regarded as poetry in America:

Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam,
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home;
A charm from the sky seems to hallow us there,
Which, seek through the world, is ne'er met with elsewhere.
Home, home, sweet, sweet home!
There's no place like home! There's no place like home!

An exile from home, splendor dazzles in vain;
O give me my lowly thatched cottage again!
The birds singing gaily, that came at my call,—
Give me them, —and the peace of mind, dearer than all!
Home, home, sweet, sweet home!
There's no place like home, there's no place like home!

How sweet 'tis to sit 'neath a fond father's smile,
And the cares of a mother to soothe and beguile!
Let others delight mid new pleasures to roam,
But give me, oh, give me, the pleasures of home!
Home, home, sweet, sweet home!
There's no place like home! There's no place like home!

To thee I'll return, overburdened with care;
The heart's dearest solace will smile on me there;
No more from that cottage again will I roam;
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home!
  Home, home, sweet, sweet home!
There's no place like home, there's no place like home!

And spirits of a higher strain followed slavishly in the footsteps of the English poets, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, just then come into vogue; somewhat later in those of Byron, Shelley, and Keats; others take the German romanticists as models. To mention only the most eminent as examples: Washington Allston (1779-1843) reminds one of Wordsworth by his contemplative art tinged with spiritual feeling as well as by his preference for the unheeded small things of nature; the same applies to Richard Henry Dana, the elder (1787-1879), and Charles Sprague (1791-1875). Maria Gowen Brooks (1795-1845), in her fanciful epic, *Zophiel*, is completely under Southey's influence. Edward C. Pinkney (1802-1828) was a disciple of Thomas Moore.

Fitz-Greene Halleck (1790-1867), whose poem, *Marco Bozzaris*, is to the present day recited in American schools as a model of sustained diction, reminds one of Byron and Wilhelm Müller in every stanza; James Abraham

Hillhouse (1789-1841) and James Gates Percival (1795-1856) sought in vain to approach Shelley.

Two stanzas from *Marco Bozzaris* will confirm this characterization:

At midnight, in the forest shades,
  Bozzaris ranged his Suliote band,
True as the steel of their tried blades,
  Heroes in heart and hand.
There had the Persian thousands stood,
There had the glad earth drunk their blood
  On old Platæa's day;
And now there breathed that haunted air
The sons of sires who conquered there,
With arm to strike and soul to dare,
  As quick, as far as they.

An hour passed on—the Turk awoke;
  That bright dream was his last;
He woke—to hear his sentries shriek,
"To arms! they come! the Greek! the Greek!"
He woke—to die midst flame, and smoke,
And shout, and groan, and sabre-stroke,
  And death-shots falling thick and fast
As lightnings from the mountain-cloud;
And heard, with voice as trumpet loud,
  Bozzaris cheer his band:
"Strike—till the last armed foe expires;
Strike—for your altars and your fires;
Strike—for the green graves of your sires;
  God—and your native land!"

And if a poet did once have an hour of illumination and succeed in giving adequate expression to his inspiration, he spoiled his work by yielding to the hereditary Puritan craving for commentary and didacticism. Thus, for example, Nathaniel Parker Willis (1806-1867), in his poem, *Parrhasius*,* relates how the Athenian painter, Parrhasius, observes a gray-haired but athletic-looking slave who has been exposed for sale all day and has borne every sort of indignity with stoical self-control. Only when the miserable man is alone and his muscles relax does his unutterable anguish show itself in his face. Then the artist is seized with the creative longing, and he has the prisoner brought to him that he may produce the master work of his career—a Prometheus from life. The painter has the old man chained, his scarcely healed wounds torn open, and has him put to the rack: the keener his suffering, the more does the artist rejoice, and when he succeeds in conjuring the dimming eye of the dying man upon the canvas, his heart exults at his triumph.†

But the design is spoiled at the close by the

*Stedman, p. 103.

†The *motif* of the artist in whom the impulse of creation crushes all human emotion is used by Chamisso in his poem, *Das Kruzifix* (1830).

poet's wearisome sermon against boundless ambition!

And yet in spite of all that, in spite of crudity and homeliness, in spite of moralizing and imitation, it would be unfair to pass over all the poetry prior to and during the time of Bryant in disdainful silence. It contains isolated grains of purest, golden poesy. Thomas Hastings wrote a number of religious poems which maintain an honorable place among the best of that species; Samuel Woodworth (1785-1842), in his melodious, heart-felt *Old Oaken Bucket*, bequeathed to American literature a touching remembrance of the paternal home, a poem still unforgotten; George Tucker (1775-1861) has by his one elegy, *Days of My Youth*, earned the right to be placed beside George Herbert or Ludwig Heinrich Hölty.

And Joseph Rodman Drake (1795-1820), who died at such an early age, and who in his ambitious poem, *The Culprit Fay*, shows himself an imitator of Coleridge, produced in the patriotic lyric, *The American Flag*, a poem which, with its spontaneous, vigorous diction, has successfully defied all adverse criticism and still lives on to-day. The fame achieved by this poem is, it is true, shared by Joseph Hopkin-

son's inferior, *Hail, Columbia;* the *Star-Spangled Banner*, by Francis Scott Key; and the unpretending *America*, by the clergyman, Samuel Francis Smith. These four poems and *Yankee Doodle* are known the world over.

4. WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878) was the son of a physician. He received the good education customary in Massachusetts, and was to devote himself to law; but he was irresistibly drawn to literature. He had already aroused attention as a lad of fourteen by a satirical poem on Jefferson; his elegy, *Thanatopsis* (1817), made him famous at one stroke. Unfortunately, he soon after became a journalist in New York, and the hours he could devote to art were numbered. Bryant's first serious poem is a reminder in form and content, in melody and temper, of the long series of elegists who, in the eighteenth century, gave the keynote to contemplative lyric poetry and obtained for it a European appreciation. Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*, Thomas Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, hovered before the youthful Bryant when he

wrote *Thanatopsis;* the pliantly soft blank verse he learned, to be sure, rather from Keats and Shelley. The unobtrusive, contemplative didacticism of a Cowper and Wordsworth—a didacticism which in Pope had taken the severe form of exposition and argument—combined with the melodious, variegated softness of the verse characteristic of Keats and Shelley, gives Bryant his distinctive place in American lyric poetry:

To him who in the love of nature holds
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
A various language; for his gayer hours
She has a voice of gladness, and a smile
And eloquence of beauty, and she glides
Into his darker musings, with a mild
And healing sympathy, that steals away
Their sharpness, ere he is aware. When thoughts
Of the last bitter hour come like a blight
Over thy spirit, and sad images
Of the stern agony, and shroud, and pall,
And breathless darkness, and the narrow house,
Make thee to shudder, and grow sick at heart;—
Go forth, under the open sky, and list
To Nature's teachings, while from all around—
Earth and her waters, and the depths of air—
Comes a still voice—Yet a few days, and thee
The all-beholding sun shall see no more

In all his course; nor yet in the cold ground,
Where thy pale form was laid, with many tears,
Nor in the embrace of ocean, shall exist
Thy image.

An illustration of how Bryant gives spontaneous, purpose-free expression to a phenomenon of nature, but, under the influence of didactic tradition, provides it with an instructive close, is the short poem, *To a Waterfowl*, which Hartley Coleridge exaggeratedly pronounced the best short poem in the English language, a judgment to which Matthew Arnold subscribed. The poet sees the waterfowl cleave the pathless air, and glorifies the mysterious Power that guides the bird so unerringly to its unseen goal. The poem concludes thus:

He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone
Will lead my steps aright.

It is not at all the purpose of these remarks to set Bryant down as an imitator or an epigone; only to point out his historical connections and spiritual relationships. A poem like *The Evening Wind* or *Robert of Lincoln* at once calls up

Shelley; another, *To the Fringed Gentian*, arouses memories of Wordsworth. But every word of these lyric portrayals of moods bears the impress of personal experience; the reader has this conviction irrespective of the fact that Bryant sings only of native birds and flowers. That we absorbed Wordsworth and Shelley before we did Bryant is not his fault.

What is there, in the authorship of all the world, that is absolutely new?

The art of the genuine poet to make every idea, though it has been thought a thousand times before, appear as new as if it had flashed across a human brain for the first time, is characteristic of Bryant in a high degree; and the secret of this incommunicable magic is, in his case, that he apprehends the most ordinary phenomena with the deepest, the strongest feelings. What an endless array of things have been sung and said of the concept of the past! Its irrevocableness, unapproachableness, relentlessness, but also its generative force and imperishableness—poets and thinkers have told us all that. But on reading Bryant's poem, *The Past*, one is thrilled by every stanza as if no one had ever said anything of the kind.

Bryant was fully conscious of his mastery of blank verse; that gave him the courage to translate Homer into English, to enter the lists, therefore, with men like Chapman and Pope—not to speak of more modern translators—and not without success.

5. WHITTIER

Closest to the thought and feeling of the people, nay, part and parcel of them, is the farmer's son, John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892), who, more than any other writer, reflects the Sunday spirit of Puritan New England. For with the farmers and woodcutters of this region so scantily favored by nature, with the artisans and fishermen, shopkeepers and teamsters, as in the case of all Calvinist-bred peoples—for example, the Scotch—we must distinguish two kinds of souls: on week-days the New Englander is hard, sober, filled with the care of making a living, a passion for gain, and an automatic impulse to hold on to what he has; he is completely bound up in business. On Sundays he is a different being: open to all noble incitements, a loving neighbor, a self-sacrificing citizen, filled with a sincere desire to show himself worthy of the grace of the elect. From this Sunday mood of

the plain man of the people did all the creations of Whittier spring; that is why no other poet of New England has been so well understood and so widely read.

By his family history as well as by his own course of life Whittier is held up to youth as a model of vigorous manhood, of that wondrous Puritan stock that subjugated America. An ancestor of the family was among the first settlers of New England. He had ten children, of whom five were sons, each six feet high and of powerful frame. The youngest of these giants had nine children. Of these the youngest had eleven children. The youngest of these was the father of our poet. John did not take after his kind. He had too little physique and too much spirit for a husbandman. He went to the city, therefore, and became a journalist, but of a peculiar sort, for his pen was devoted almost exclusively to the cause of negro emancipation.

What brings Whittier still closer to his readers of to-day is the circumstance that he sprang from Quaker stock and was bred in the principles of that sect. The democratic idea in Puritanism, the equality of all men before God, was carried, in theory, by the Quakers to

its extreme; more than the general use of "thee" they could not, of course, actually put into practice. Of far greater significance is it that they deemed it possible for every individual, quite independently of position, descent, education, course of life, to receive the "inner light" through the Holy Spirit. This was the strongest, most consistent denial of authority; in this sense the Quakers were the most extreme Puritans.

But this confidence granted to the individual signified an entirely new side to religion: rigidity of creed, intolerant orthodoxy, was superseded by a mild latitude. Every one was answerable, in his own way, for his soul's salvation—not by an unchallengeable confession of faith, but by his mode of life, by deeds of love and justice. Along this road the Quakers sped centuries ahead of the Puritans, so closely related to them in creed; and, starting from premises wholly different from those of the age of enlightenment, they arrived at the same result—humanitarianism.

Whittier is the poet of this humanitarianism, and it is this that gives him his distinctive place in American literature. The concluding stanzas of the poem, *An Autograph*, in which he

writes his own epitaph, happily express the position he occupies:

And while my words are read,
Let this at least be said:
"Whate'er his life's defeatures,
He loved his fellow-creatures.

"If, of the Law's stone table,
To hold he scarce was able
The first great precept fast,
He kept for man the last.

"Through mortal lapse and dulness
What lacks the Eternal Fulness,
If still our weakness can
Love Him in loving man?

"Age brought him no despairing
Of the world's future faring;
In human nature still
He found more good than ill.

"To all who dumbly suffered,
His tongue and pen he offered;
His life was not his own,
Nor lived for self alone.

"Hater of din and riot
He lived in days unquiet;
And, lover of all beauty,
Trod the hard ways of duty.

"He meant no wrong to any,
He sought the good of many,
Yet knew both sin and folly,—
May God forgive him wholly!"

Whittier's *Proem* in the first collection of his poems* very modestly indicates the character of his poetry. He has saturated himself with the English poetry of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries; yet he feels that the melody of a Milton, the spirit of a Marvel, the deeply penetrative feeling for nature of a Cowper or a Wordsworth, the psychology of a Shakespeare, are unattainable by him. But he has a heart for the suffering of humanity, a vivid sense for liberty and justice: that will be found in his verses.

And in reality he promises rather too little than too much. His songs of freedom and brotherhood have an Isaiah-like ring, as have those of Swinburne; only the American shares with the Old Testament prophet his immovable faith in God.

Whittier has command of the entire vocabulary of English literature from Shakespeare to Tennyson, but he prefers to use only the noblest expressions; just as he closes his eyes to what

*Stedman, p. 128.

is mean, in spite of being endowed with the keenest observation. He knows all sides of human nature, but prefers to glorify the brighter ones. His poem, *Prophetess*,* shows him as a student and delineator of human nature of unusual insight.

The ballad is almost a characteristic of Whittier and Longfellow—only Longfellow takes his matter preferably from a distance in time and space, while Whittier, on the contrary, draws from his immediate surroundings, as in *Maud Muller* or *Parson Avery*.

Whittier in his *Songs of Labor*, which do not confine themselves to the glorification of labor in general—as do, for example, the poems of the English Socialists, Mackay and William Morris†—but sing of the honorable work of the cobbler—with all the prosaic details of footwear: heel, sole, upper‡—sails close to the commonplace; that he happily escapes that danger he owes to his high native qualities and, above all, to his lofty pathos impregnated with the teachings of the Bible.

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*Stedman, p. 138.

†Leon Kellner, "Die Englische Literatur im Zeitalter der Königin Viktoria," pp. 159 and 525.

‡Page, p. 273.

Whittier's *Centennial Hymn** with its resounding organ-tone—

> Our father's God! from out whose hand
> The centuries fall like grains of sand—

may have floated before Kipling's mind when, in 1897, after the noise of the Jubilee, he composed his famous *Recessional.*

6. MINOR POETS

The clergyman John Pierpont (1785-1866) is still remembered on account of his songs against slavery. *The Fugitive Slave's Apostrophe to the North Star*† rivals the masterpieces of the entire class, the slave-songs of Bryant, Whittier, and Longfellow.

Puritanical—that is, not appealing to the senses—restrained, but full of temperament, are certain poems of Emily Judson (1817-1854)—known through her volume of prose sketches, *Alderbrook*—who, as the wife of the missionary, Adoniram Judson, spent a number of years in Bengal. There, at the sick-bed of her husband, she wrote the splendid poem, her own experi-

*Stedman, p. 140.
†Stedman, p. 128.

ence, *Watching*, which will outlive her fame as a narrator.

Much good will but slight capacity was brought to the poet's calling by Thomas William Parsons (1819-1892), the translator of Dante. Parsons has neither deep emotion, nor thought, nor melody, nor taste. The poem, *Dirge, For One Who Fell in Battle*, is characteristic of his commonplace style:

Room for a soldier! lay him in the clover;
He loved the fields, and they shall be his cover;
Make his mound with her who called him once her lover:
Where the rain may rain upon it,
Where the sun may shine upon it,
Where the lamb hath lain upon it,
And the bee will dine upon it.

Far higher in the scale stands Jones Very (1813-1880). He has a spark of the spirit of Transcendentalism, strong Puritanic faith—even if not in the old Puritanic God—and not a little sense for rhythm, which Parsons lacked. His German translator, Albert Ritter, accords him exaggerated appreciation (*Jones Very, der Dichter des Christentums*, Linz, 1903).

William Wetmore Story (1819-1895), who at

first pursued law, not without success, then abandoned it, and as a sculptor attained a prominent place, chose by preference, as poet, antique subjects, such as *Praxiteles and Phryne* and *Cleopatra*, but never achieved with those more than a feeble rhetoricism. Only where the Puritan blood asserts itself does he find the strong word for the strong feeling. The poem, *Io Victis*, a hymn to those who have fallen by the wayside, deserves a place among the best verses of American literature.

Julia Ward Howe, who would otherwise be classed among the minor poets, had the one great inspiration of her life when, concentrating all the force of emotion, she wrote the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*. Nothing stronger has flowed from the pen of Whittier himself.

Nowhere else, perhaps, do we find so many versifiers who have not received "the call" as in the more modern American literature. Franklin, Irving, Cooper, Hawthorne knew their limitations, and were careful not to exceed them. Not so in the second half of the nineteenth century. Almost every writer of that period essayed poetic flights. This arouses the suspicion in advance that the Americans of that period have not a very exalted conception of the nature

of poetry. The prolific Richard Henry Stoddard (1825-1903), whom the American critic Stedman pronounced the most eminent of living American poets, is a typical example of those rhymers who with playful ease translate every occasion, every event, into verse, who are endowed with everything—except spirit and genius. Two thirds of those classed in America as poets belong to this category.

Bayard Taylor (1825-1878) was regarded in his lifetime as a great poet, and not in his own country alone; to-day he is as good as forgotten. This discordance between the judgment of his contemporaries and that of posterity finds adequate explanation in Taylor's personality. He was a marvel of temperament and intellectual elasticity: in his versatility, restlessness, and spirit of enterprise, a perfect type of the Yankee. Born on a Pennsylvania farm, and reared to become a farmer, he found means, as a youth of sixteen, to leave his native village and, after all sorts of intermediate ventures, to start on a rambling tour through Europe (1844), busily writing as he travelled. He learned to know England, stayed for a time in Germany, where he mastered the German language, made an excursion to Italy, and wrote—wrote continu-

ally. His travel-sketches found favor; hence he published them in book form: "Views Afoot; or Europe Seen with Knapsack and Staff." Six editions of the book appeared in a single year. This success secured him recognition by the *Tribune*, a New York journal of high repute, which he fully justified. When the newly discovered gold fields aroused the attention of the world, Taylor was sent there by this paper, and the result was a volume of widely read descriptions, "El Dorado" (1850). The same year he journeyed to the Orient to distract his mind from thoughts of his wife, torn from him by death; and with the little volume, "Poems of the Orient," he became the Bodenstedt of America.

Then he was again drawn to the West. In Germany he made the acquaintance of Marie Hansen, daughter of the astronomer, and married her. He devoted himself now with the greatest earnestness to novel writing and met with success here as he had in other literary fields. "Hannah Thurston" (1863), "John Godfrey's Fortunes" (1864), "The Story of Kennett" (1866), are brilliantly written, but otherwise fall below the average of American narrative art. Taylor's most ambitious work is "The Picture

of St. John" (1867), an autobiographic poem which elicited great admiration. About 1870 his health began to fail; pecuniary cares were an added burden. The evening of a life so rich in fruitful labor passed gloomily in every sense. His appointment as Minister to Germany (1878) seemed to open a brighter prospect; but he was overtaken by death.

To-day, three or four decades after his death, his verses sound forced, borrowed, and commonplace. One work alone keeps his name fresh —the translation of Faust; the best, according to many competent judges, in the English language.

From the choirs of the last decades a number of women's voices strike the ear with force and charm: Emily Dickinson, Ellen Louise Chandler (-Moulton), Louise Imogen Guiney, Josephine Preston Peabody (-Marks).*

7. THE POETRY OF THE SOUTH

It is an observation often made by people acquainted with the country, that the Southern section of the United States is not one iota less

*The singling out of these names does not mean to signify the exclusion of others; it is but too easy to miss hearing even eminent singers.

godly and strong in faith than the North, only not so Spartan in temper. The slaveholders who in 1861 took up arms in the Civil War were no less deeply convinced of the justice of their cause than the Puritans of the North. This confidence in the good cause finds most poignant expression in the poetry of the South, notably in Henry Timrod (1829-1867), who, by at least one poem, *The Cotton Boll*, establishes his rank as peer of the great ones of the North.

But while the poetry of the North, animated by a youthful consciousness of strength, looks jubilantly forward, in robust health and perfect confidence, toward certain victory all along the line, the creations of the South betray almost universally a sickly foreboding of death. It is perhaps not without significance that the greatest singers of the Southern States died young—Henry Timrod lived to the age of thirty-eight, Sidney Lanier thirty-nine, Edgar Allen Poe forty, Paul Hamilton Hayne, who attained the highest age among them, lived to be fifty-six.

Aside from Poe, who in reality belongs to no country and cannot, therefore, be claimed by the Southern States as their own, none of those mentioned has a strong, individual

nature; they merely call up great models to our minds.

With special pride the South accounts Sidney Lanier (1842-1881), who was a native of Georgia and fought for the Lost Cause, its greatest poet. For a foreigner, Lanier is a lovably touching figure, something like Chénier, but hardly a strong creative individuality. He was descended from an old musical family which plumed itself upon having found recognition already at the court of Queen Elizabeth. Sidney himself was a master of the flute, which accompanied him in all the paths of his life; he clung to it even in war. ~~Extremely poor~~, and bearing the seeds of death from the fields of battle, he devoted himself to English philology with such success that he obtained an appointment, poorly paid, at the Johns Hopkins University of Baltimore, a position which he held until his early death.

Lanier was one of those poetical natures that harbor a project for years and decades without giving it expression. Of such plans for more elaborate creations we have beautiful fragments, as, for example, for the epic *The Jacquerie*, which has for its theme the insurrection of the French peasantry in the fourteenth century. The statement that Lanier did not complete

the work on account of illness and poverty can hardly be accepted as conclusive; his poetic endowment was not equal to such an ambitiously planned production, for his was a lyric-didactic nature, prone to description. Critics have long since established his spiritual kinship with Bryant. In reality his fame rests upon three poems of an essentially contemplative and descriptive character: *Corn*, *The Symphony*, *The Marshes of Glynn*. Lanier is, however, more modern than Bryant; full of social-revolutionary thoughts, in opposition to the Moloch capitalism, a disciple of Carlyle and Ruskin, a follower of Emerson and Whitman in his feeling of being one with all nature.

CHAPTER IV

THE SUBJECTIVE WRITERS

A. THE TRANSCENDENTALISTS

1. CHARACTER OF TRANSCENDENTALISM.—It is customary to designate as Transcendentalists a group of authors who met in Concord, a small town near Boston, in the years 1835 to 1845, and who for a time possessed an organ of their own, *The Dial*, for the spread of their ideas. The following are regarded as the most eminent of that company: William Ellery Channing (1780-1842), Amos Bronson Alcott (1799-1888),* Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), Theodore Parker (1810-1860), Margaret Fuller (1810-1850), Jones Very (1813-1880), and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862). As is invariably the case in such groups, drawn together by chance, there are in this company

*Outside of America the father is not known at all, while his daughter, Louisa May Alcott, on the contrary, enjoys a wide reputation. The stories, "Little Women" (1868-69), "Little Men" (1871), "Joe's Boys" (1886), are ardently admired by German girls conversant with English.

persons who, connected by little more than a casual acquaintance, suddenly find themselves in the same boat, at least as viewed from the standpoint of literary history. Wordsworth had little inner relationship with Southey, and yet both have been handed down to posterity under the term "Lake Poets"; Emerson is miles removed from Alcott and Channing, and yet they are classed together as "Transcendentalists."

On the other hand, many who by virtue of their spiritual kinship belong to that circle are never mentioned in that connection, such as Herman Melville, the author of the sea tale, "Moby Dick," and Walt Whitman, with whom literary history has thus far hardly known how to deal. At all events, an admiration of German philosophy, such as had dominated the choicest spirits since the appearance of Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason," was common to the whole group.

As early as 1829 Carlyle concluded a diatribe against the materialism of his day with the prophecy that metaphysics, contemned at the time, would come into its own again; and Emerson, in a lecture delivered at Cambridge (Massachusetts) in 1837, expressed the confident hope

that America would soon supply the world with something besides grain and machinery. These prophecies were fulfilled in the Transcendentalists. They raised metaphysical study in America to a position of honor, and that with such success that the aphorisms of Emerson, the foremost Transcendentalist, are to-day current in German translations, while the great Transcendental systems of the Fichtes, Schellings, and Hegels, to whom Emerson is indebted for his fundamental views, slumber in the dust of the libraries, disregarded by the great public.

2. Emerson was, perhaps, the only one in the entire group who had a clear conception of what constituted the Transcendental creed:

"What is popularly called Transcendentalism among us is Idealism; Idealism as it appears in 1842. As thinkers, mankind have ever divided into two sects, Materialists and Idealists, the first class founding on experience, the second on consciousness; the first class beginning to think from the data of the senses, the second class perceive that the senses are not final, and say the senses give us representations of things, but what are the things themselves they cannot tell. The materialist insists on facts, on history, on the force of circumstances and the animal wants

of man; the idealist on the power of Thought and Will, on inspiration, on miracle, on individual culture.

"In the order of thought, the materialist takes his departure from the external world, and esteems a man as one product of that. The idealist takes his departure from his consciousness, and reckons the world an appearance."*

This idealistic view of life was inculcated by Emerson in hundreds of aphorisms.

Disciples of Emerson will protest against speaking of "aphorisms" of the master; they will ask where Emerson ever published such fragments. True, indeed, the excellent collected edition of Emerson's works† contains nothing under such a head; but we must not be led astray by names and superscriptions. All of Emerson's essays, addresses, and lectures are essentially, and by their origin, aphorisms. "Here I sit and read and write, with very little system and, as far as regards composition, with the most fragmentary result: paragraphs incompressible, each

*Centenary Edition, "Nature. Addresses and Lectures," p. 331.

†"Emerson's Collected Works," 6 vols. With introduction by John Morley. Macmillan & Co., London. More complete is the Century edition in 12 vols., with portraits and copious notes by Edward Waldo Emerson. Houghton Mifflin Co.

sentence an infinitely repellent particle." (Letter to Carlyle in the year 1838.) This is not by any means intended as a disparagement but as a characterization. Emerson's style is the harmonious expression of that thinker. The fragmentary, the instantaneous, the temperamental, in his writings should, therefore, be emphasized at the very outset.

Emerson's life may be told in few words. From both sides he had Puritan blood in his veins. The family on his father's side emigrated to America in the seventeenth century, and an ancestress, Rebekka Waldo, had fled to Boston, with other Waldensian families, from the bloodiest persecutors. Emerson lost his father at a very early age, and was educated by a quiet, musical, capable mother and a Calvinistically austere aunt. Following the family tradition, he became a minister and practised that calling for a number of years in a Boston Unitarian congregation. But even the simple ritual of the Unitarians grew in time intolerable to Emerson, he having, indeed, it appears, cut loose at an early date from all dogma and tradition. He resigned his charge, and from 1832 he lived on a little estate in Concord, upon a small fortune and the proceeds of his lectures.

In 1833 he made a trip to Europe in quest of relaxation and to recruit his strength; while there, he made the acquaintance of literary celebrities, and sought out a man who was as yet far from being famous, Thomas Carlyle. Vehement of speech, this son of a mason groaned in his Scotch village isolation, tormented by petty cares, racked by impotent rage against a blind and deaf world so persistently insensible to his worth. Emerson, who shared Carlyle's idealist outlook upon life and his opposition to the ever-growing power of industrialism, did not shun the long journey; and his visit proved extremely welcome to Carlyle and his wife in their disconsolate state. On Emerson's second sojourn in England, the distinctive characteristics of the two men came out in sharp relief in their intercourse, and their friendship suffered a temporary clouding. Carlyle, who as a son of the people espoused the Chartist cause heart and soul, even if, naturally, he did not dream of actually joining the promiscuous company that promoted a good cause with such evil means, could not comprehend Emerson's equable spirit in face of the social misery; and he doubtless expressed with far greater harshness in personal inter-

course the reproach which he addressed to Emerson in his letters with literary restraint—namely, his remoteness and indifference to earthly concerns. Carlyle had already written in 1844:

"For the rest, I have to object still (what you will call objecting against the Law of Nature) that we find you a speaker indeed, but as it were a *Soliloquizer* on the eternal mountain-tops only, in vast solitudes where men and their affairs lie all hushed in a very dim remoteness; and only *the man* and the stars and the earth are visible—whom, so fine a fellow seems he, we could perpetually punch into, and say, 'Why won't you come and help us then? We have terrible need of one man like you down among us! It is cold and vacant up there; nothing paintable but rainbows and emotions; come down and you shall do life-pictures, passions, facts. . . .'"*

Carlyle knew perfectly well that the attempt to influence a writer's works by remonstrances is a hopeless task, and he did not indulge in illusions as regards Emerson, either; but the chasm was there, and nothing could bridge it over. The year 1847, the date of Emerson's second sojourn in London, marks, therefore, a sort of crisis in

*Charles Eliot Norton, "The Correspondence of T. Carlyle and R. W. Emerson," II, p. 81.

the relations of the two men. The estrangement abated, however, when the sea rolled between them; the correspondence was resumed, and discontinued only on the threshold of old age.

Emerson made still a third visit to Europe, in the year 1872, and this time he had difficulty in warding off the homage of enthusiastic disciples. These journeys are the only events in the quiet life of the thinker. Calmly and evenly his days flowed on with his family, among his books and trees. His mother and his wife stood lovingly between him and the restless world; his son, Edward Waldo, grew to be a fine physician.* The innate gentleness of his nature increased with advancing age from year to year; toward the close of his life he lost all memory for everyday concerns, and lived only in the world of the past and of imperishable interests.

For the uninitiated who wish to become acquainted with Emerson, it would be advisable to leave the poems, essays, and lectures aside and begin with an apparently very little known and greatly underrated work, "English Traits" (Vol. 4 of John Morley's edition). It would

*It is to this son we are indebted for the publication of Emerson's "Journals" (1820 to 1855), in 8 vols. Houghton Mifflin Co.

be difficult to find a book from which one can gather such varied, profound, definitive information concerning England and the English as is given in these sketches, and one may safely venture the heresy that in none of his writings does Emerson appear so simple, so natural, so lovable and clear-sighted. All the excellences of Emerson the thinker and writer shine forth in this little work; the defects which mar his other writings are almost completely absent. It shows us the man in the zenith of his creative power. The gift of poetic vision, the exquisite similes, the divining of the profoundest relations, the wealth of eloquence—all that captivates us in Emerson is found here; what is lacking is only what we should gladly dispense with elsewhere—the tone of the prophet, the air of importance which presents a banality as a revelation, the elaboration and repetition, the arbitrariness.

How greatly the "English Traits" differs in style from the other works of Emerson is best shown by those chapters which touch most closely the subjects treated in the Essays; as, for example, the sections relating to religion and literature. To quote only a saying here and there:

"It is with religion [of the England of to-day] as with marriage. A youth marries in haste; afterward, when his mind is opened to the reason of the conduct of life, he is asked what he thinks of the institution of marriage and of the right relations of the sexes. 'I should have much to say,' he might reply, 'if the question were open, but I have a wife and children, and all question is closed for me.' In the barbarous days of a nation, some *cultus* is formed or imported; altars are built, tithes are paid, priests ordained. The education and expenditure of the country take that direction, and when wealth, refinement, great men, and ties to the world supervene, its prudent men say, Why fight against Fate, or lift these absurdities which are now mountainous? Better find some niche or crevice in this mountain of stone which religious ages have quarried and carved, wherein to bestow yourself, than attempt anything ridiculously and dangerously above your strength, like removing it."

"In York minster, on the day of the enthronization of the new archbishop, I heard the service of evening prayer read and chanted in the choir. It was strange to hear the pretty pastoral of the betrothal of Rebecca and Isaac,

in the morning of the world, read with circumstantiality in York Minster, on the 13th January, 1848, to the decorous English audience, just fresh from the *Times* newspaper and their wine and listening with all the devotion of national pride. . . . Here in England every day a chapter of Genesis, and a leader in the *Times*."

"Their religion is a quotation; their church is a doll; and any examination is interdicted with screams of terror. In good company you expect them to laugh at the fanaticism of the vulgar; but they do not; they are the vulgar."

"The later English want the faculty of Plato and Aristotle, of grouping men in natural classes by an insight of general laws, so deep that the rule is deduced with equal precision from few subjects, or from one, as from multitudes of lives. Shakespeare is supreme in that, as in all the great mental energies. The Germans generalize: the English cannot interpret the German mind. German science comprehends the English. The absence of the faculty in England is shown by the timidity which accumulates mountains of facts, as a bad general wants myriads of men and miles of redoubts to compensate the inspirations of courage and conduct."

The last remark might have been taken from one of the Essays, so strongly marked is the metaphysical bias, so overconfidently does Emerson here make use of the standard which he obtains, after all, only from a much-disputed philosophical tenet. One could hardly blame a chorizont if he expressed the opinion that it is impossible for the "English Traits" to have been written by the author of the Essays; and the strongest support of his hypothesis would be the circumstance that the "English Traits," with all its depth, all its earnestness, manifests a delicious humor which is totally lacking in Emerson's other productions.

After the beginner has studied "English Traits," he may venture upon the essay, *Poetry and Imagination*, which forms the transition, as it were, from the lucid to the obscure, from the seeing to the dreaming, from the descriptive to the phantom-pursuing Emerson; from coherent, systematic trains of thought to a desultory succession of stray reflections. But take care! The reader must not lose patience on the first page, else he will commit the error of regarding as superficiality what is really a pardonable abandon, which on closer acquaintance is found to be charming and inspires our confidence. This

essay is perhaps the only connected and intentionally elementary presentation of the idealist view of life which permeates all the currents of Emerson's thoughts; and it has, beyond this, the great advantage that it brings out sharply and clearly what one is elsewhere required to infer from oracular sayings.

Emerson is a metaphysician, to be sure, as was Plato; but his monism is at bottom the evolution theory. On the threshold of the essay *Poetry and Imagination*, we are met by such trusty guides as St. Hilaire, Oken, Goethe, Agassiz, Owen, and Darwin (Vol. VI, p. 4). The whole universe, from the downright-perceptible to the supersensual-incomprehensible, is one, but is pursuing a constant course of upward development: the metamorphosis of the plant is an image of the world in miniature. *One* animal, *one* plant, *one* substance, *one* force; the laws of light and heat explain each other; likewise, the laws of color and sound; just as galvanism, electricity, and magnetism are only different manifestations of the same force.

Thus far we follow Emerson readily, even if somewhat impatiently; we have, indeed, heard all that before. But this is only the elementary presumption, the little multiplication table from

which the mathematician develops the Abelian functions. The entire visible universe, hill and dale, stream and wood, the seasons, iron, stone, steam—everything is a symbol of the spiritual world; all natural laws are but parallels to what obtains in the moral world. The Philistine, the rationalist, the narrow-minded materialist, sees only the symbol; Plato and Swedenborg saw the real universe behind the symbol. It is from this standpoint that Emerson interprets everything that enters into the world of phenomena—creation and extinction, history and politics, genius and politics, genius and talent, intellect and heart, heroism, character, love, friendship, wisdom and folly, art and literature.

It may readily be imagined how difficult it must have been for Emerson to bring his interpretation of the riddle of the universe into harmony with all these observations upon life. Fortunately, he never even attempted to build up a system. As I remarked at the outset: each essay is really a pearl-strand of aphorisms, the discovery of whose connection Emerson leaves, in the main, to the acuteness of the reader. We constantly come across the most beautiful and most profound utterances where we least ex-

pect them. It is, of course, not impossible to arrange these fragmentary thoughts in an orderly way under certain heads, nor would it be a task without merit to collect luminous rays, as it were, from Emerson's works, for German readers, as has long since been done by Americans; but is this in accord with the author's spirit? He would presumably have decidedly opposed such a falsification. "I am myself!" would probably have been his polite but irrevocable answer.

B. THE PRIMITIVES

1. THE STARTING-POINT OF THE PRIMITIVES

This brings us to what is most profound, most characteristic, most fruitful in Emerson's nature and influence, to that way of viewing things which connects him with the subjectives, with Thoreau and Whitman.

The right to one's own individuality was first insisted upon with distinct positiveness and emphasis by Emerson, among all the revolutionary thinkers of the world. Thoreau and Whitman carried the doctrine into action, into practical life. "Wherever a man comes," says Emerson in his famous Divinity School Address, "there comes revolution. The old is for slaves. . . .

Let me admonish you, first of all, to go alone; to refuse the good models, even those which are sacred in the imagination of men, and dare to love God without mediator or veil." And in another place: "We have been born out of the eternal silence; and now will we live—live for ourselves—and not as the pall-bearers of a funeral, but as the upholders and creators of our age; and neither Greece nor Rome, nor the three Unities of Aristotle, nor the three kings of Cologne, nor the College of the Sorbonne, nor the Edinburgh *Review* is to command any longer. Now that we are here we will put our own interpretation on things, and own things for interpretation. Please himself with complaisance who will—for me, things must take my scale, not I theirs."

This Emersonian doctrine of self-dependence, this exhortation to begin life anew, to be one's own ancestor, Thoreau and Whitman followed to its extreme conclusions.

2. THOREAU.—Henry Thoreau was the grandson of a Frenchman who emigrated to Massachusetts from the island of Jersey in the eighteenth century and married a Scotchwoman. Henry's father, who was a lead-pencil manufacturer in Concord, had a struggle to

make a living for his family, but he was contented with himself and the world, lovable, obliging, a good, honest fellow. Henry grew up like all the poor youth in the villages and small towns of New England: living a great deal in the fine, open air, granted little in the way of indulgences. He drove his father's cattle to pasture barefoot when a child of six, studied the catechism, reading, and writing in the elementary school. Like all talented New England lads, he, too, longed to enter a university; he went to Harvard and learned enough to obtain an academic degree and become a teacher in his native place. But he did not please his fellow-citizens, ostensibly because he did not whip the children. Thenceforth he was, in reality, without a calling; he attempted a versification of *Prometheus*, translated various things from Pindar, was something of a surveyor, then was for two years a guest in Emerson's house, where he made himself useful in every way. In his twenty-eighth year he suddenly withdrew from the circle of poets and thinkers that had gathered around Emerson into the isolation of Walden Pond. He began to build his log hut in the early spring of 1845—enduring his solitary existence there until September, 1847. How

did he live and on what? He has himself told us in his unique work, "Walden."*

He rose early and took a bath in the pond; then he tilled his bit of ground, where he raised potatoes, beans, and beets. Before and after noon he generally took a walk of several hours. "I think I cannot preserve my health and spirits," he remarks in the essay on walking,† "unless I spend four hours a day at least . . . sauntering through the woods and fields, absolutely free from all engagements."

As the produce of his acres did not sustain him, he fished in the pond and worked occasionally as surveyor, carpenter, and day laborer in his immediate vicinity. And he felt, as he says, as happy as the first creature in Paradise. Nevertheless, he returned after the lapse of two and a half years to the much-reviled civilization of the town, worked again as gardener in Emerson's household, then as a pencil-maker. Before he had reached his fortieth year it became evident that his lungs were affected. He had always had the seeds of pulmonary consumption, and his distaste for indoor confinement and urban occupation may, in the last analysis, be due to

*Thoreau, "Walden," London, W. Scott, p. 39, *et seq.*

†"Thoreau's Essays," London, W. Scott, p. 3.

that cause. In his forty-eighth year his powers of resistance against the deadly disease were exhausted. He was buried on the shores of Walden Pond; a pyramid of pebbles, steadily increasing in height, is his tombstone.

Thoreau's flight from the world is entirely of a mundane nature and bears little relation to his Transcendental views. He, too, often speaks of the soul as the essential thing as compared to that accident, our body; but what determined him to forsake the overcrowded abodes of his fellowmen was not the craving for undisturbed spiritual culture, but the atavistic longing for an untrammelled life, for breathing-space and freedom, for color and fragrance. Thoreau, the author, labors under a double burden, an inherited and a voluntarily assumed one. The Puritan tradition of didacticism, which was inherent in every native of New England, was greatly strengthened in him by his admiration of the example set by Carlyle. Every experience is made an occasion for more or less extended instruction; the consciousness of having a teacher's mission on earth does not leave him for an instant. This didacticism spoils the book, "Walden," upon which Thoreau's fame really rests.

Thoreau is known to German readers exclusively as a prose writer, and probably even American readers rarely come across his poems. And yet he has left us verses of the greatest solemnity and the finest polish, as, for example, the few stanzas, full of thought, in *Inspiration*. The following lines from that poem have remained indelibly fixed in my mind:

I hearing get, who had but ears,
And sight, who had but eyes before;
I moments live, who lived but years,
And truth discern, who knew but learning's lore.

3. WHITMAN.—Emerson, Thoreau, and Walt Whitman, who by virtue of their entire endowment, their life, and their mission as writers belong together, should not be separated in the history of literature.

All three are nonconformists, not only in relation to the ruling church, but in relation to the ruling customs.

Every respectable person in New England has a definite calling, even if he does not need it for his maintenance; Emerson, Thoreau, and Walt Whitman never allowed themselves to be placed under the yoke of any of the usual occupations, in spite of needing it for their maintenance.

In close social contact custom compels even the most callous to observe a certain measure of regard for the prejudices and feelings of their fellowmen. Our three nonconformists, though they had the most delicate appreciation of the spiritual life of others, offended against conventional sensibilities without the slightest compunction. It was Walt Whitman, in particular, who, with the freedom of primitive man, rejected every sort of fig leaf and impressed the whole world, consequently, as shameless. And as in their daily life, so in their thought, speech, writing. They ignored the traditional laws of composition, paid no heed to prescribed forms, to the versification and diction of their predecessors, but sought, as did aforetime Herder and the other storm-and-stress writers, a new vessel for the new wine.

Of the three primitives Walt Whitman carried this revolt against tradition the furthest; he has, therefore, been exposed to the greatest misunderstandings.

Like Thoreau, Whittier, and so many other of the great spiritual lights of America, Walt Whitman was a descendant of farmers and small tradespeople. His paternal ancestors emigrated to America from England in the

seventeenth century; those on his mother's side came from Holland. Walt was born in the year 1819 at West Hills, Long Island; from 1824 the Whitmans resided in Brooklyn, where the father practised his trade as carpenter. Walt attended the elementary public schools, but it devolved upon him at an early age to contribute to the support of the family—first as an errand boy in a lawyer's office, then in that of a physician. In order to escape from this menial position, he learned typesetting and tried work as a printer. He did not endure this labor long, for he was irresistibly impelled to wander afield in the open air. Thus he became a country school teacher and roamed from village to village. In every New Englander, a good judge of America once remarked, there is the making of a more or less talented journalist. Walt Whitman, too, soon found his way to the newspaper. At the age of twenty he founded, in his home town on Long Island, a short-lived weekly; he returned to New York the following year and maintained himself as printer and journalist. The life and stir of the metropolis appealed to him; he was a frequent visitor of the theatre, particularly the opera, and was a passionate admirer of Booth, whom he saw in

all his Shakespearian impersonations. He made the acquaintance, at the same time, of Poe and Cooper. In 1842 he published the problem novel, "Franklin Evans, the Inebriate." In 1846 and 1847 he edited the Brooklyn *Eagle*, but once more the roving passion seized him and drove him from the town. In the company of his brother, a congenial spirit, he wandered southward and reached New Orleans on foot. There he made his living as collaborator on a local paper, and remained as long as the novel life of the South had something to impart to him. After he had seen, or believed he had seen, everything of consequence, he returned to New York. He had by now had enough of newspaper writing, and suddenly discovered in himself an interest in practical life. He entered, accordingly, into the business of his father, who, from a modest carpenter, had become a big building contractor. Here Walt held out for several years. Then he realized that one earned too much money in that business, and withdrew from it affrighted. As if in expiation, he devoted himself entirely to the elaboration of his first poems.

In 1855 the little book "Leaves of Grass" first saw the light of day—a veritable event in Amer-

ican literature—at first, of course, a disregarded event. Very few copies of the now valuable work were sold. Emerson alone recognized the merit of the poems and congratulated Whitman on his work in a long and enthusiastic letter.

In 1862 Walt's brother, George, was wounded in the battle of Fredericksburg. He hastened to his side and remained in the hospital long after his recovery—the good genius of the wounded, whom he tended, comforted, cheered, with inexhaustible kindness. Whitman had, as we know from Thoreau, a fascinating personality, and he put it unreservedly into the service of the sick soldiers. He naturally contracted the so-called hospital fever in this Samaritan activity, a malady which clung to him the rest of his life.

After the close of the Civil War he obtained a government office through the intercession of influential friends, but soon lost it when it was learned in high quarters that he had written the "indecent book," "Leaves of Grass."

This incident had as its consequence William Douglas O'Connor's brilliant controversial treatise, *The Good Gray Poet*, with the practical result that Whitman received another position

almost immediately, this time in the attorney-general's department. This post he occupied until 1873, when he suffered a stroke of apoplexy. But his robust nature conquered, and he recovered sufficiently to enable him to publish an enlarged edition of the "Leaves of Grass" and to deliver the famous address on the death of Lincoln. In 1882 he published a collection containing his youthful poems, a number of tales, and the address upon Lincoln's death. In 1882 he suffered another apoplectic stroke, but his courage and his optimism were unquenchable. He died in 1892—to the last moment undaunted in spirit, patient and cheerful.

A phenomenon like that of Walt Whitman strikes students of literature and æsthetics with an elemental bewilderment and shows indisputably that the old views, means, and methods no longer suffice, that the prevailing conceptions are in need of a fundamental reëxamination. The perplexed critic, confronting the unprecedented, the unknown, in any unusual specimen, is thrown back upon æsthetics and literary research alone. The botanist who beholds a new plant obtained from a region just discovered, having a peculiar soil and atmos-

pheric conditions, is always able to determine without any difficulty to what species it belongs, wherein it resembles the known plants related to it, wherein it differs from them. The critic stands helpless before a Walt Whitman. Neither the current classification nor the prevailing estimate can be made to fit the isolated individual; in vain does the literary connoisseur cudgel his brains to discover a related species, an analogy. Now, the objection should not be raised that life is inexhaustible in its combinations and that, consequently, all systematism is bound to fall short. That is not true. Nature has created countless living beings with immeasurable gradations and transitions; but the biologist can classify plant and animal without excessive effort—the systematism of the botanist and zoölogist has never yet failed altogether. The student of literature alone must start from the beginning when confronting an author of distinctive character, just as though he had not already classified thousands of examples of æsthetic endowment.

Whitman has but one thing in common with the artists in words thus far known to us—that he thinks and speaks in words; that is all that can be asserted of him as far as classification is

concerned. Is he a poet? It is difficult to say. The words are not poetical, for they are taken from the lips of the common man, the artisan, and the farmer, from the language of text-books and dissertations. The rhythm is occasionally musical, but as a rule it is not to be distinguished from prose.* Traditional embellishments, such as rhyme and strophic division, are lacking entirely. Even the visualizing of the subjects of thought, images and similes, is disdained by Walt Whitman. The earmarks, accordingly, of what has hitherto been considered poetry are absent. And the substance? The subject-matter? Yes, he has this in common with the poets—he sings of love as the beginning and end of all poetry. But what reader will recognize the poems which he calls "Children of Adam" as love songs?

From pent-up aching rivers,
From that of myself without which I were nothing,
From what I am determined to make illustrious,
  even if I stand sole among men,
From my own voice resonant, singing the phallus,
Singing the song of procreation,

*It has been asserted that his rhythm is essentially hexametric; this view is controverted by Basil de Selincourt ("Walt Whitman," London, 1914), and with justice.

Singing the need of superb children and therein
superb grown people,
Singing the muscular urge and the blending,
Singing the bedfellow's song (O resistless yearning!
O for any and each the body correlative attracting!).

Another theme of poets, too, love of country, is to be found in Walt Whitman, but how far removed from ours are his conceptions of fatherland, his feelings for one's native soil!

Aware of the fresh free giver the flowing Missouri,
aware of mighty Niagara,
Aware of the buffalo herds grazing the plains, the
hirsute and strong-breasted bull,
Of earth, rocks, Fifth-month flowers experienced,
stars, rain, snow, my amaze,
Having studied the mocking-bird's tones and the
flight of the mountain-hawk,
And heard at dawn the unrivall'd one, the hermit
thrush from the swamp-cedars,
Solitary, singing in the West, I strike up for a New
World.

. . . . . .

With firm and regular step they wend, they never
stop,
Successions of men, Americanos, a hundred millions,
One generation playing its part and passing on,
Another generation playing its part and passing on
in its turn,

With faces turn'd sideways or backward toward me
to listen,
With eyes retrospective toward me.

. . . . . .

Americanos! conquerors! Marches humanitarian!
Foremost! century marches! Libertad! masses!
For you a programme of chants.
Chants of the prairies,
Chants of the long-running Mississippi, and down
to the Mexican sea,
Chants of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and
Minnesota,
Chants going forth from the centre, from Kansas,
and thence equidistant
Shooting in pulses of fire ceaseless to vivify all.

Walt Whitman's strongest, most striking trait, the one most repellent to the Philistines, is his self-absorption, his egotism as the English term it. This psychical disposition is by no means to be confounded with egoism. Walt Whitman was the most unselfish, humane, noblest "egotist." The whole universe—not only in theoretical cognition—exists primarily through him and for him; he is, as he candidly confesses, the most important fact to himself, the most interesting cosmic phenomenon. The "Leaves of Grass" is, as he declared,* his *carte*

*"Backward Glance o'er Travelled Roads."

de visite, and the first poem of that collection is, characteristically, the *Song of Myself*, the opening verse being a challenge to caricature:

I celebrate myself, and sing myself.

Not, however, that he regarded himself as something special, something extraordinary. On the contrary, he wants to be only the average man, in whom the whole nation, the entire American democracy, nay, the entire world, will recognize itself; what he is, that every other man is as well; only he has the courage to be himself. He does not reckon upon being comprehended by his contemporaries; his work is dedicated to future generations, when all men, united as comrades and loving brethren, will feel as he does.

The other trait in Walt Whitman, one which aroused the indignation not of Puritan America alone but of the whole world, is his fanatical enthusiasm for truth, which, conscious of its own innocence and of the purest intentions, aims to call things by their right names. This zeal has been wrongly interpreted as immorality. Only thus is the nakedness of language in *The Song of Myself* and in the collection "Children

of Adam" (notably in the poems *I Sing the Body Electric, A Woman Waits for Me, Ages and Ages Returning at Intervals, I Am He That Aches with Love*) to be understood.

While Walt Whitman's self-absorption excited ridicule, and his alleged sensuality offended the Puritanic spirits, a third feature of his disposition called forth the stormy opposition of the world of criticism. Walt Whitman has no æsthetic checks, no self criticism, no faculty of distinguishing between poetical essentials and poetical side-matters, between what is appropriate, from the point of view of effect, and what runs counter to that object. He tells everything that passes through his mind, he names everything that he sees—without selection, without gradation. That is why his enthusiastic rhapsodies produce the impression of an auctioneer's catalogue, or, more correctly, of a systematic vocabulary.

How did Walt Whitman arrive at this sort of lyric emphasis, produced by enumeration and repetition? All his tracks lead back to the Psalms.* Needless to remark that in every Puritan household the Psalter had for hundreds of years been almost fused with everyday

*Cf. particularly Psalms 116, 119, 136.

life, had passed into the flesh and blood of every individual.

And still a fourth peculiarity explains his isolated place in nature. He has the gift of astonishment, which no poet or thinker ever lacked, in a higher degree than any poet ever had before him. While to us dull Philistines the spectacle of the sun and moon, of rain and snow, have become unregarded, everyday things, Walt Whitman sees ever again in the pettiest phenomenon of nature a new miracle:

Why, who makes much of a miracle?
As to me I know of nothing else but miracles,
Whether I walk the streets of Manhattan,
Or dart my sight over roofs of houses toward the sky,
Or wade with naked feet along the beach just on the edge of the water. . . .
To me every hour of the light and dark is a miracle,
Every cubic inch of space is a miracle,
Every cubic yard of the surface of the earth is spread with the same,
Every foot of the interior swarms with the same.
To me the sea is a continual miracle,
The fishes that swim, the rocks, the motion of the waves, the ships with men in them,
What stranger miracles are there?

Wholly unpuritanic is Walt Whitman's optimism. In perfect accord with Rousseau, he

does not look upon the earth as a vale of tears, but as a paradise; he does not see the world as a chaos of accidents, but as a cosmos, a work of art, complete as a whole and in every minutest detail.

From imperfection's murkiest cloud
Darts always forth one ray of perfect light,
One flash of heaven's glory.
To fashion's custom's discord,
To the mad Babel din, the deafening orgies,
Soothing each hill a strain is heard, just heard,
From some far shore the final chorus sounding.
O the blest eyes, the happy hearts,
That see, that know the guiding thread so fine,
Along the mighty labyrinth.

The pantheistic view of life Walt Whitman shares with Emerson and Thoreau, and he has, moreover, following Emerson's example, clothed his presentiments in mystical language. In comparing Emerson's *Woodnotes*, and the brief poem *Brahma*, with Whitman's *Eidolons* and other metaphysical effusions such as *Of the Terrible Doubt of Appearances*, *Song of the Answerer*, *Rolling Earth*, *Mystic Trumpeter*, it will be found that Emerson has already expressed with tersest brevity, as befits an oracular utterance, all the thoughts that Whitman voices in long-

winded rhapsodies accompanied by explanatory comments, as it were.

The idea of evolution, the uninterrupted chain of generation and destruction and new creation, Whitman never tires of repeating in ever new language (*Song of Myself, Children of Adam*, etc.).

His belief in the progress of mankind and in the Platonic future state rests upon the unbounded capacity for development of the human character. This faith he has in common with John Stuart Mill and all utilitarians.*

As to Walt Whitman's diction, its most characteristic traits are repetition, the rhetorical question, ejaculation. His predilection for repetition exhibits itself, not only in the heaping up of words of allied meaning, he likes to use the same initial words and does not hesitate to employ the same three or more verses in different parts of the same poem, as in the *Salut au Monde*.

How far he carries this mode of repetition is shown in such verses as

Their Throbbings Throbbed

or

I dream in a dream all the dreams of the other dreamers.

*Kellner, "Die Englische Literatur im Zeitalter der Königin Viktoria," p. 79.

American admirers of Whitman like to claim that he is the most American of all poets, that he, as no other, gives expression in his poems to the greatness of America. One of the editors of the "Complete Writings," Dr. Oscar Lovell Triggs, finds that "it is a picture of America in the nineteenth century. All America is in it. Nothing is lacking. We are presented, not seriatim, but in a consecutive arrangement of intermittent and, as it were, casual flashes, with the original wilderness of North America and its first colonization from the Old World—its aborigines, explorers, trappers, pioneers, settlers, farmers, planters, miners, slave and free negroes." And the writer gives a long list of all that is found in Whitman—"lakes, rivers, lagoons, mountains, coasts, bays, ports, cities, and boundaries; its deserts, swamps, its pastoral plains; its innumerable farms with all their products—wheat, cotton, maize, rye, sugar, rice, cattle, wood, maple, fir, poplar, cedar, live-oak, cypress . . . " And in this catalogue and price-list style evidence is adduced that Whitman mirrors in poetic form all of America of the last three hundred years. This assertion is, to put it mildly, a *petitio principii*, for the world must first give its assent to the proposition that

two elements which it has hitherto regarded as essential characteristics of all poetry—namely, rhythm in the form, and selection in the substance—should be thrown overboard or shoved into a corner as of no consequence whatever. The world must decide whether it prefers the first chance word because it sprang ready and unsought to the poet's mind, or one that he employed because in the whole range of his vocabulary no other could be used in its place. The world must furthermore decide whether the old element in the effect of a poem, the joy in sheer ability, shall be entirely eliminated. Only when this referendum shall in the course of time have been applied and have resulted in favor of artless poetry, only then shall we be willing to bow to the judgment which declares Walt Whitman to be *the* poet of America. Walt Whitman's influence upon modern poetry is, I believe, overestimated. Reversion to the *ego* and to primitiveness spring, as we have seen, from Emerson. But what is wholly new in Whitman and peculiar to himself alone, his style, has found few imitators. In Germany, Johannes Schlaf and Paul Remer have exalted Walt Whitman as the starting-point of a new form and of a new melody, but the noise of the cory-

bants has died away; it has waked no echo anywhere.

4. MELVILLE.—This group of writers had a most original compeer in Herman Melville, the author—almost unknown in Germany—of the sea tale "Typee" (a journey to the Marquesas Islands), 1846; "Omoo", (descriptions of the South Sea), 1847; "Mardi," 1848; "White Jacket, or the World in a Man-of-War," 1850; "The White Whale, or Moby Dick," 1851, etc.

These tales are characterized by a realism which anticipates the Zolas and Goncourts, but surpasses them in verity, inasmuch as every particular was seen and experienced. In "Moby Dick," his most widely read work, the writer narrates in the first person how a certain Ishmael enlists on a whaler as a common sailor, and gives all his experiences until the foundering of the vessel. That Ishmael was Melville himself. What Kipling admired so greatly in Frank T. Bullen's "Cruise of the Cachalot" was accomplished by the American nearly fifty years earlier, and that with a considerable measure of wordly wise humor. Unfortunately, Melville fell at an early day under the influence of Carlyle and the spiritualists; that proved very detrimental to his de-

lineation, and particularly to his style. He represents his hero, Captain Ahab, a whaler, as a mysterious fire-eating figure of colossal proportions who outdoes himself in high-sounding phrases and indulges in a quantity of exclamatory words. And at the same time, behind palpable events of the most commonplace sort, the cosmic soul of things is constantly sought.

CHAPTER V

THE HARVARD INTELLECTUALS

1. COMMON CHARACTERISTICS.—Of the poets that are brought together here under the common roof of Harvard University, each had a sharply marked individuality. One cannot detect in any poem of Longfellow a kinship of soul with Holmes, in any line of Lowell's political satire an answering chord to the poesy of the singer of *Hiawatha.* And yet there is one essential trait that they have in common, which makes them recognizable in the midst of the great mass of contemporary poets and prose writers—academic culture, the finest urbanity, and with all their Americanism a cosmopolitan breadth of view. The genius of Harvard College, the historic guardian of cultural tradition and of spiritual cohesion with the mother country, is personified in these three men who occupied, not in vain, chairs at the famous Alma Mater.

These academic men of Harvard are the last examples of the thinkers of former days who

still possessed the privilege, like the philosophers of antiquity, of indulging to their heart's content in free-hand literary production outside their special calling and occasionally even within it. Lowell was a most conscientious and thorough student of literary history, and could make it very unpleasant for a dabbler, as his sharp attack upon incompetent editors* shows. But that did not prevent him from chatting, joking, pamphleteering, in prose and verse. Holmes was a professional man of the first order; but he was also the Autocrat of the Breakfast-table. To-day, these men, in order to be taken seriously by their colleagues, would hide their lighter effusions in the most secret drawers of their desks.

The spiritual kinship of these men is apparent in all their works; Lowell not only reminds one constantly of Holmes by his extensive reading, but the two humorists are often struck by the same conceit, often even clothe a thought in a like form.

It may appear paradoxical, and yet it is an absolute fact, that American literature is indebted to one of these highly learned Brahmins for the utilization of dialect, and to another for

*Library of Old Authors. Literary Essays, I, 262 *et seq.*

with equal facility; German literature has henceforth a chief share in his culture and his poetic production.

In the year 1836 he returns to Cambridge, and the lectures that he designed for 1837 show that German literature had made a most profound impression upon Longfellow's universal spirit. Of the twelve lectures six are devoted to the Germans. And this scholar does not hesitate to devote two of the latter to a semi-contemporary, the author of *Siebenkäs*, Jean Paul Richter.

Henceforth Longfellow's life flows on quietly and peacefully; the life of a thinker and poet, who, raised above parties, strives to realize in his activity the ideal of a man of culture. The still Sabbath peace, the solemn devoutness of a clear Sunday morning filled with sunshine and the warbling of birds, hover over Longfellow's creations.

The good and the noble in human nature, that is the real province of this American poet. The heavenly daughters, Hope and Love, are the Muses to whom he owes his inspiration, and it is but fitting that full justice is done by the poet to the third in the union, Faith. The hopeful, trusting, loving human heart he understood eminently well and voiced its feelings in con-

vincing words; in depicting malice, often as he made the attempt, he never succeeded.

As a lyric poet Longfellow is well-nigh German in his tenderness and melody, in his experiences and moods. The German evensong (*Abendlied*) is unique in literature; what language can point to anything like "Füllest wieder Busch und Thal," or even "Die Sonne sank?" Longfellow approaches very closely to the German *Abendlied*. The cozy twilight, the peaceful evening, the rejuvenating night—to these impressions his soul is most delicately attuned, and to them are we indebted for his most deep-felt, most genuine, one might say most German, verses: *The Light of the Stars*, *Hymn to the Night*, *Footsteps of Angels*, *The Day Is Done*, *The Belfry of Bruges*. The evening song dominates in Longfellow's lyricism, and he was fully conscious of it, for in the poems of 1846 an evening song opens and concludes the volume.

The first stanzas of the poem *Curfew* may be cited as an example:

Solemnly, mournfully,
Dealing its dole,
The Curfew Bell
Is beginning to toll.

Cover the embers
And put out the light;
Toil comes with the morning
And rest with the night.

Dark grow the windows,
And quenched is the fire;
Sound fades into silence—
All footsteps retire.

No voice in the chambers,
No sound in the hall;
Sleep and oblivion
Reign over all!

In his best productions, notably in those of his first period, Longfellow lays his scenes in medieval times, or at least in countries of the Catholic faith. Baumgartner,* one of his biographers, observes that in this predilection of the poet the longing "that one faith, one Christianity, one Church, may again unite all nations into a single Christian family, finds expression."

Such an idea was altogether foreign to Longfellow's mind. To his peace-loving nature

*Longfellow's Dichtungen. Ein literarisches Zeitbild aus dem Geistesleben Nordamerikas, von Alexander Baumgartner, S. J. Zweite vermehrte und verbesserte Auflage. Mit Longfellow's Portrait. Freiburg im Breisgau, Herdersche Verlagshandlung, 1887.

every sort of controversy is repellent, and many passages might be cited from his prose and verse which plainly contradict such an interpretation as this. No, what captivated him in Catholic subjects was the plastic part that religious faith plays in them, on the one hand, and the vivid, variegated coloring on the other. "The Spanish Student" has the oft-treated story of Preciosa as its theme; the innocence of the pious maiden triumphs over all malice and baseness. In this play, hardly strong dramatically, the coloring is thoroughly Spanish, and invested, accordingly, with all the peculiarities of the Catholic character. Whoever attaches weight to local color will find great enjoyment in reading the piece and will admire the impartiality of the poet; but who will be inclined to see in Preciosa a glorification of Catholic Spain? Did Weber perchance have that purpose in view when he popularized the same subject in Germany through his music?

No less faithful as regards historical and local color is *The Golden Legend*, the story of Der arme Heinrich in dramatic form. It may be confidently asserted that the medieval poem occupies a higher place artistically, by its consistency and verity, than does the somewhat ambitious adaptation of the modern poet.

There the chief figures are boldly bodied forth, with powerful strokes; we comprehend perfectly the maiden's heroic deed, and equally the knight's decision to accept so unnatural a sacrifice. Longfellow wished to make of the legend a comprehensive, one might almost say an exhaustive, picture of the Middle Ages. But the incidental matter is far too rich for the two leading figures of the drama. The poet has utilized here all the knowledge of the Middle Ages that he acquired in his painstaking studies. *The Golden Legend* is a plastic panorama, in which we behold the life of a German town in the twelfth century from the most varied points of view. And one cannot, indeed, marvel sufficiently at the fidelity with which Longfellow presents all the conditions upon which he touches. He is almost more medieval than his prototype, Hartmann von Aue. The miracle play in the midst of the drama is a little masterpiece of imitation; were we to come across it in some library, in Old English orthography, we should without hesitation declare it to be a valuable find, a production of the thirteenth century.

Tone and color, then, are medieval through and through. But the characters, their thoughts and emotions?

Longfellow has treated Der arme Heinrich not as a romantic but as an objective poet—indeed, were it not for Zola and his associates, one might very well say as a realist; the play is a historical painting, matter and color are from the Middle Ages, the soul is derived from our time. For what is the idea that animates the poet? Not the maiden's longing for celestial beatitude, nor her spirit of self-sacrifice alone; for what then would signify the prologue, the storm of the Powers of the air about the Strasburg Cathedral and the intervention of Lucifer? The underlying idea is clearly enough given at the close:

> It is Lucifer
> The son of mystery;
> And since God suffers him to be,
> He, too, is God's minister,
> And labors for some good
> By us not understood.

That is to say, "he is the Spirit that desires evil and produces good"; in other words: Hate wishes to destroy us, love uplifts us. Who is not reminded here of Faust? As the fundamental idea of *The Golden Legend* differs from that of Der arme Heinrich, so also is the motive of the

maiden humanized in Longfellow by a love that is earthly and yet so divine.

Longfellow made repeated attempts to force the dramatic form—always without success. In 1868 appeared his "New England Tragedies"; one of the dramas has for its theme the persecution of the Quakers in Boston, the other the burning of witches at Salem. Both pieces are failures, and are justly pronounced even by American critics to be unsatisfactory and unpalatable. *Judas Maccabæus* (1872) can hardly* be characterized, being no more than a sketch. In the *Divine Tragedy* the life and passion of Christ are represented with an intentional simplicity meant to remind us of the medieval mysteries. *The Masque of Pandora* (1875) treats the old myth in a style formed, indeed, upon great models, but which does not even distantly approach them. Longfellow's last dramatic poem, *Michael Angelo*, is the biography of the hero in the shape of a dialogue, but again replete with carefully studied details like *The Golden Legend*, so that the reader obtains a faithful picture of the civilization of Italy in the sixteenth century.

Narrative poetry Longfellow offers us in two

*Schönbach, "Aufsätze," p. 261.

forms—the ballad and the epic. Both give evidence of the German school through which he passed. *The Skeleton in Armor*, *The Wreck of the Hesperus*, and the other ballads are vigorous, fresh, stirring; the reader is carried away by the swing of the rhythm as with Bürger, the sustained style creates an emotional tension as with Uhland.

Of the epics, *Evangeline*, *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, *Hiawatha*, and *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, the first two are in hexameter, a mark that suggests Voss and Goethe.

The widely read epic, *Evangeline*, relates how two young and hopeful lives are blighted by the clumsy, merciless interposition of a political measure. The English government orders a sudden attack upon the French village of Grand-Pré and the inhabitants are scattered to the four quarters of the earth. Thus Evangeline and her affianced lover are torn asunder forever. Throughout her life Evangeline seeks the lost one; when an aged woman, she finds him dying in a hospital. As the use of the hexameter itself indicates, Longfellow was encouraged in his attempt by *Hermann und Dorothea*. He nowise approached Goethe's creation, however. The creation of human characters was not Long-

fellow's strong point; the figures in *Evangeline* are bloodless shadows.

The language is simple and popular. All the more discordant are certain labored similes, as in

Sweet was her breath as the breath of kine that feed
in the meadows.

or

Silently one by one, in the infinite meadows of
heaven,
Blossomed the lovely stars, the forget-me-nots of the
angels.

Far above *Evangeline* stands the legend of *Hiawatha*. The matter is actually, as the poet says, taken

From the forests and the prairies,
From the great lakes of the Northland,
From the mountains, moors, and fen-lands
Where the heron, the Shuh-shuh-gah,
Feeds among the reeds and rushes.

The primitive world of old America finds admirable expression in *Hiawatha*, and the hero, Hiawatha, the promoter of religion and peace,

has taught us moderns, too, who have advanced so far in culture, many a good precept.

Longfellow enriched American literature by excellent translations from Old-English, German, Danish, Swedish, French, Italian (Dante), Portuguese, and Spanish.

Of all Longfellow's works *The Golden Legend*, *Evangeline*, and *Hiawatha* have been the most widely read and have found the greatest recognition. In truth, the poet gave his best in these productions, and the critic need add but a few lyrics in order to arrive at a judgment of his work and to designate his place in the literature of his people and of the world at large.

Longfellow took Goethe's saying about world-literature perhaps too seriously; rarely do we find in his works a note that takes hold of us as something new, never heard before. He reflects the literature of the old and the new time, of the East and the West. He is a master of form; and in the art of entering into the spirit of a strange people he has scarcely a peer. He is the Herder of English literature. And as the words "Light, Love, Life!" decorate his tombstone, so the character of Longfellow's poetry is best summarized by the words "Faith, Love, and Hope."

3. HOLMES.—Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-

1894) was likewise born under a lucky star, and the quintessence of his writings would be of the nature of a hymn of happiness. So profound, so clear-sighted, and at the same time so genial an optimist the world has perhaps never seen. Fate, to be sure, dealt very kindly with him. Holmes was extremely fortunate as son, friend, husband; vulgar cares he never knew; and, as a native American, there was little occasion for him to feel the weight of any political or social evils. But not all of his antecedents were as favorable to the philosopher as were the good family from which he sprang, the social intercourse and the new-world freedom which he enjoyed. The asceticism of the Calvinist Puritan, and his terrifying sense of sin, might well have stifled a philosophic inclination to laughter in this son and grandson of Puritans, had not Holmes possessed the gift of shaking off all these unwholesome influences of his ungenial surroundings.

Holmes is a unique phenomenon; he has no parallel among the writers of any age. Born in 1809 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, he grows up surrounded by books and book-learning in an atmosphere of clergymen and university dignitaries; at the age of fifteen he goes to Phillips

Academy at Andover, where, under the disciplinary rod of a teacher, stiff, narrow, orthodox to the core, he is to be won over to the charms of a theological career. When, after a year's stay, he leaves the school, he is ready to study everything—except theology. First he tries law, but he soon abandons it for medicine. For three years he studies in America; then he prevails upon his father to allow him to finish his studies in Paris. In 1833, accordingly, he goes to France, adapts himself readily to Parisian conditions, is enthusiastic about the language, the food, the professors, and enjoys his youth to the full. From Paris he travels to get a glimpse of the Rhine, and makes a flying visit to Switzerland and Italy. In 1836 Holmes is home again; in a not especially elegant street of Boston a red lamp announces that Dr. Holmes has begun his practice. The sick have at first no great confidence in the laughing physician. All the greater was his confidence in himself; in his thirty-first year he married—with his uncertain income a double hazard. But it turned out that he had won the grand prize in the lottery. His wife was the best, the most charming, the cleverest woman in the world. His practice, none too large, allowed him leisure for scientific work.

He published a number of papers, among others a very severe polemic against homœopathy, and in 1847 he was appointed professor of anatomy and physiology at Harvard University. In the year 1882 he retired on a pension; four years later he sojourned in Europe for a hundred days, and in October, 1894, in the eighty-sixth year of his age, he slipped, almost in the midst of a chat, into the great realm of the unknown.

These biographical details we gather more or less clearly from his table-talk books,* nor can much more be learned from the two-volume biography†. The author's complete works in thirteen volumes‡ contain, in reality, all the material for a detailed biography; the documents and letters appended to Morse's work have in no way changed the picture of Holmes that we formed from his own writings.

Holmes is the best representative of the spirit of the nineteenth century, if one is willing to reckon the last ten, or possibly the last fifteen, years as belonging to a new period. The cen-

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*"The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table" 1857-58; "The Professor at the Breakfast-Table," 1860; "The Poet at the Breakfast-Table," 1872; "Over the Teacups," 1891.

†"Life and Letters of Oliver Wendell Holmes," by John T. Morse, Jr., London, 1896.

‡Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, 1891.

tury of natural sciences and inventions; of intellectual, moral, and political emancipation; the century that in all things explains the present by the past; the century that produced philosophers without systems—that marvelous century might be inferred from the writings of this American provincial were all other literature to disappear from the face of the earth at the behest of a new Omar.

The sequence of Holmes's writings shows very clearly the advance of liberalism in the Anglo-Saxon world. With the utmost discretion is the domain which theologians and philosophers claim exclusively as their own touched upon in the first work, "The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table" (1858). "Do you want an image," says the Autocrat, "of the human will or the self-determining principle as compared with its prearranged and impassable restrictions? A drop of water, imprisoned in a crystal; you may see such a one in any mineralogical collection. One little fluid particle in the crystalline prism of the solid universe!"

"But you weaken moral obligations!" exclaim the company at table.

"Weaken moral obligations? No, not weaken but define them."

~~Ten years later, 1868~~, the "Professor" permits himself to handle these subjects quite differently. Among the imaginary table companions there is a divinity student; the author has assigned to this young man the rôle of *agent provocateur*. His objections and reflections incite the Professor to ever greater boldness; they act as little obstructions which heighten the freshness and vivacity of his flow of speech.

"I am afraid," he remarked, "you express yourself a little too freely on a most important class of subjects. Is there not danger in introducing discussions or allusions relating to matters of religion into common discourse?"

"Danger to what?" I asked.

"Danger to truth," he replied, after a slight pause.

"I didn't know Truth was such an invalid," I said. "How long is it since she could only take the air in a close carriage? . . . Truth is tough. . . . Does not Mr. Bryant say that Truth gets well if she is run over by a locomotive, while Error dies of lockjaw if she scratches her finger?"

And now a conversation ensues in which the theologian is told the "truth." Much of it is long since antiquated, but many a saying pro-

duces an effect of freshness and power as though the words were spoken to-day.

"The active mind of the century is tending more and more to the two poles, Rome and Reason, the sovereign church or the free soul, authority or personality, God in us or God in our masters."

He waxes most vehement when it is a question of giving the *coup de grâce* to the theological conception of sin: one sees how heavily the Calvinist consciousness of sin must have weighed upon his youth.

Of course in these things a German can learn but little from Holmes; for it was in Germany that the natural sciences were first used as battering-rams against the theological strongholds, and free souls, in the German sense, the Anglo-Saxon world has never even up to the present day produced in any considerable number. Philosophy on the other side of the channel and the ocean is still in large measure a handmaid of theology; consciously or unconsciously, every philosopher is intent upon finding satisfactory answers, from a modern standpoint, to the old theological questions; the religious interest dominates—often tacitly—the study of antiquity and ethnology; even the agnostic spirits

look to stones for disclosures which in Germany have long since ceased to be of interest. It is no wonder, then, that Holmes, too, the grandson and great-grandson of Puritans, concerns himself so deeply with original sin; it is, on the contrary, very remarkable that he has devoted so little space to that subject. For it is not religion or the philosophy of religion, but philosophy in its most modern sense, that he is above all concerned with. Holmes is primarily a psychologist; and he was certainly the precursor, perhaps the teacher, of the Germans in a very essential chapter of psychology.

The "Philosophy of the Unconscious," which first obtained a name and a following in Germany in 1869 through Eduard von Hartmann, was presented in a masterly way, and ardently advocated, by Holmes fully eleven years earlier (1858). It is not, of course, a philosophical system, for it is not in the plan of the breakfast-table to present systems; but those observations of the year 1858 contain, in the germ and in epigrammatic form, the fundamental ideas of the new doctrine which gained such popularity through Hartmann. Ten years later "The Professor at the Breakfast-Table" takes up the reflections of the "Autocrat" at more than one

point, and in June, 1870, Holmes delivered before the famous Harvard chapter of the Phi Beta Kappa Society his address on *Mechanism in Thought and Manners*, which aims to combine these aphorisms into a sort of system. The essay bears at its head Pascal's significant motto: "Car il ne faut pas se méconnaître; nous sommes automates autant qu' esprit."

Holmes makes very little ado about his contribution to the knowledge of the unconscious. In the first place, he takes the greatest pains to point out the elements of that knowledge in Leibnitz and mentions a number of contemporary scholars, in order to show how the Philosophy of the Unconscious occupied the attention of all psychologists in the sixties.

"The readers of Hamilton and Mill, of Abercrombie, Laycock, and Maudsley, of Sir John Herschel, of Carpenter, of Lecky, of Dallas, will find many variations on the text of Leibnitz, some new illustrations, a new classification and nomenclature of the facts; but the root of the matter is all to be found in his writings."

Secondly, the witty American's own reflections are so highly spiced that their scientific significance, their deep earnestness, may easily escape the reader. The very first remark of the

"Autocrat," which is meant to acquaint us with the workings of the Unconscious, is calculated to arouse mirth rather than deep reflection. "You don't suppose that my remarks made at this table are like so many postage stamps, do you—each to be only once uttered? . . . I shall never repeat a conversation, but an idea often. . . . A thought is often original, though you have uttered it a hundred times. It has come to you over a new route, by a new and express train of associations. Sometimes, but rarely, one may be caught making the same speech twice over, and yet be held blameless. Thus, a certain lecturer, after performing in an inland city, where dwells a *Littératrice* of note, was invited to meet her and others over the social teacup. She pleasantly referred to his many wanderings in his new occupation. 'Yes,' he replied, 'I am like the Huma, the bird that never lights.' . . . Years elapsed. The lecturer visited the same place once more for the same purpose. Another social cup after the lecture, and a second meeting with the distinguished lady. 'You are constantly going from place to place,' she said. 'Yes,' he answered, 'I am like the Huma——' and finished the sentence as before. What horrors when it

flashed over him that he had made this fine speech, word for word, twice over! Yet it was not true, as the lady might perhaps have fairly inferred, that he had embellished his conversation with the Huma daily during the whole interval of years. On the contrary, he had never once thought of the odious fowl until the recurrence of precisely the same circumstances brought up precisely the same idea."

No less facetious, only far more profound, is the following observation: "I want to make a literary confession now, which I believe nobody has made before me. You know very well that I write verses sometimes, because I have read some of them at this table. (The company assented—two or three of them in a resigned sort of way, as I thought, as if they supposed I had an epic in my pocket and were going to read half a dozen books or so for their benefit.) I continued: Of course I write some lines or passages which are better than others; some which, compared with the others, might be called relatively excellent. It is in the nature of things that I should consider these relatively excellent lines or passages as absolutely good. So much must be pardoned to humanity. Now I never wrote a 'good' line in my life but the

moment after it was written it seemed a hundred years old. Very commonly I had a sudden conviction that I had seen it somewhere. Possibly I may have sometimes unconsciously stolen it, but I do not remember that I ever once detected any historical truth in these sudden convictions of the antiquity of my new thought or phrase. . . . This is the philosophy of it. (Here the number of the company was diminished by a small secession.) Any new formula which suddenly emerges in our consciousness has its roots in long trains of thought; it is virtually old when it first makes its appearance among the recognized growths of our intellect. Any crystalline group of musical words has had a long and still period to form in."

How immense the range Holmes assigns to the Unconscious, how far-reaching the effects he ascribes to it, may be descried in the following conceit: "There is a natural tendency in many persons to run their adjectives together in *triads*, as I have heard them called—thus: He was honorable, courteous, and brave; she was graceful, pleasing, and virtuous. Dr. Johnson is famous for this; I think it was Bulwer who said you could separate a paper in the 'Rambler' into three distinct essays. Many of our writers

show the same tendency—my friend, the Professor, especially. Some think it is in humble imitation of Johnson—some that it is for the sake of the stately sound only. I don't think they get to the bottom of it. It is, I suspect, an instinctive and involuntary effort of the mind to present a thought or image with the *three dimensions* which belong to every solid. . . . It is a great deal easier to say this than to prove it, and a great deal easier to dispute it than to disprove it. But mind this: the more we observe and study, the wider we find the range of the automatic and instinctive principles in body, mind, and morals, and the narrower the limits of the self-determining conscious movement."

The predominance of the Unconscious in our psychic life, and the great influence of heredity, are perhaps the only two theories of natural science which Holmes advances with almost dogmatic assurance and steadily insists upon. He even wrote two novels, "Elsie Venner" and "The Guardian Angel," in order to expound his views regarding the prevailing ideas of sin and personal responsibility. Otherwise, however, his attitude is that of smiling skepticism toward all dogmas, even those of natural science. He is enthusiastic about his vocation, he loves science

and delights royally in its successes, particularly where it annihilates blind credulity.

But it is just this that makes this lovable personality so unique, so wonderfully engaging. Holmes is the laughing philosopher, not only as regards theology, but also as regards the natural sciences and even himself.

"The Professor," he says of himself (for the "Autocrat," the "Professor," and the "Poet" are, of course, really one and the same person), "considers himself, and I consider him, a very useful and worthy kind of drudge. I think he has a pride in his small technicalities. I know that he has a great idea of fidelity; and though I suspect he laughs a little inwardly at times at the grand airs 'Science' puts on, as she stands marking time, but not getting on, while the trumpets are blowing and the big drums beating —yet I am sure he has a liking for his specialty and a repect for its cultivators."

Here is Holmes to the life, the laughing philosopher summed up in brief: humanity is a comedy, but we all are at once actors and spectators—let us not be spoil-sports; let every one take his part as well as he can, and play his rôle (which, indeed, he has not selected himself) with consummate art, if possible.

Holmes says that he never really hated a man; we may declare, upon the unanimous testimony of his survivors, that no man ever suffered on account of him.

Old age, said to be uncongenial to all men, is the surest test of a philosopher; Holmes stood the test splendidly. At fifty he wrote a charming *causerie* about old age—a rather objective topic to him as yet; at sixty he returned fearlessly to the unpleasant theme, and after he had passed his eightieth year he jested as delightfully about it as if it had been infinitely remote from him.

"The meaning of it all," he relates in the volume which is entitled "Over the Teacups," and which concludes the series of table talks, "was that this was my birthday. My friends, near and distant, had seen fit to remember it. . . . Gifts of pretty and pleasing objects were displayed on a side table. . . . How old was I? . . . I had cleared the eight-barred gate . . . I was a trespasser on the domain belonging to another generation. The children of my coevals were fast getting gray and bald, and *their* children beginning to look upon the world as belonging to them, and not to their sires and grandsires. . . . But, on

the other hand, I remember that men of science have maintained that the natural life of man is nearer fivescore than threescore years and ten. I always think of a familiar experience which I bring from the French *cafés*, well known to me in my early manhood. . . . A guest of the establishment is sitting at his little table. He has just had his coffee, and the waiter is serving him with his *petit verre* . . . the guest is calling to the waiter, 'Garçon! et le bain de pieds!' The little glass stands in a small tin saucer or shallow dish, and the custom is to more than fill the glass, so that some extra brandy runs over into this tin saucer or cup-plate, to the manifest gain of the consumer.

"Life is a *petit verre* of a very peculiar kind of spirit. At seventy years it used to be said that the little glass was full. We should be more apt to put it at eighty in our day. . . . I am willing to concede that all after fourscore is the 'bain de pieds.'"

4. LOWELL.—James Russell Lowell (1819-1891) was ambitious, on his first appearance as a humorist, to imitate and, if possible, surpass the wit of Thomas Hood, which consists essentially in a play upon words. In this aspiration he had the desired success. The poem *A Fable*

for Critics, which appeared in 1848, is a brilliant coruscation of deliciously happy puns, one more surprising than the other, and irresistible as a whole.

Phœbus Apollo is sitting idly in the shade of a laurel, when an American critic, D. (the person indicated is Duyckink, the publisher of the "Cyclopædia of American Literature") approaches, and they engage in a conversation upon literature. Apollo now takes aim at a number of noted American writers, and sketches a brief portrait of each. Emerson, Alcott, Willis, Parker, Dana, Neal, Bryant, Whittier, Hawthorne, Cooper, Margaret Fuller (under the pseudonym "Miranda"), Halleck, Franco, Irving, Poe, Holmes, and Lowell himself—are all assigned the most amiable characteristics; even Margaret Fuller, whom the poet could not abide, comes off well. Apollo bewails the fate of his Daphne, who, as is well known, was able to escape his stormy wooing only by the gods transforming her into a laurel, in the following verses:

When last I saw my love, she was fairly embarked
In a laurel, as she thought—but (ah, how Fate mocks!)
She has found it by this time a very bad box;
Let hunters from me take this saw when they need it,

You're not always sure of your game when you've
treed it.
Just conceive such a change taking place in one's
mistress!
What romance would be left?—who can flatter or
kiss trees?
And, for mercy's sake, how could one keep up a
dialogue
With a dull wooden thing that will live and will die a
log,—
Not to say that the thought would forever intrude
That you've less chance to win her the more she is
wood?
Ah! it went to my heart, and the memory still
grieves,
To see those loved graces all taking their leaves;
Those charms beyond speech, so enchanting but
now,
As they left me forever, each making its bough!
If her tongue *had* a tang sometimes more than was
right,
Her new bark is worse than ten times her old bite.

And as if in these efforts he had not proved himself sufficiently a disciple of Thomas Hood, he wrote two years later, 1850, the poem, *The Unhappy Lot of Mr. Knott*, which outdoes even the *Fable for Critics* in play upon words. Other means, too, to achieve humorous effects, such as have become customary in English verse

since the time of Byron and Frere—the burlesque reference to time-honored things, and extraneous matter such as the use of foreign proper names and the rhyming of foreign words, but, above all, the broken rhyme—were employed by Lowell in most abundant measure. Lowell gained instruction from Byron on more than one point; or he studied under the same masters, namely, the rationalist Pope and his successors, to whom English literature is indebted for a great number of highly polished, even though hardly very profound or weighty, aphorisms. The *Fable for Critics* contains many current impressions about literature and criticism; many a rhymed couplet can even to-day be applied as a motto for existing conditions. Thus, for example, what is said about the erudite critic who can fill pages about books long since recognized but is struck helplessly dumb when he confronts a new literary apparition:

> But give him a new book, fresh out of the heart,
> And you put him at sea without compass or chart.

Against the prevalent view that lyric stands so far below epic art, he says:

> A grass-blade's no easier to make than an oak.

The satirical digressions, too, into domains which have no connection with the actual theme, such as the thrusts against the advocates of capital punishment and of slavery, Lowell learned from Byron.

A digression, likewise, is the song of praise to Massachusetts, but not of a satirical kind, inspired as it is by a glowing love of his native soil.

To Lowell as lyric poet we are indebted for an abundance of melodious verse and not a few happy delineations of inward experiences. *The First Snowfall*, in its directness of feeling and simplicity of expression, is the most moving of elegies, and that in a literature so eminently rich in elegies. Strange to say, American readers of Lowell have given the preference to his poem, *After the Burial*—perhaps because it bewails three losses at once, the death of two children and a beloved wife.

Lowell's *Odes*—on the battle of Concord, on Washington's assumption of the command of the American forces, and on the Fourth of July—are patriotic without degenerating into bombast; as, indeed, all of Lowell's occasional poems confine themselves within the limits of good taste.

The famous "Biglow Papers" are verses by

the provincial Hosea Biglow relating to the questions of the day, in the Yankee dialect. Lowell entirely renounced here the artificial recourse to puns, foreign words, and labored, grotesque rhymes, which would, of course, have been out of keeping with Hosea's illiterate personality. He produced his powerful effects exclusively by the sheer originality of a speech humorous in itself and by the native wit of the Yankee. The celebrated "confession of faith," cited a thousand times, may be given as an example:

I du believe with all my soul
  In the gret press's freedom,
To pint the people to the goal
  An' in the traces lead 'em;
Palsied the arm thet forges jokes
  At my fat contracts squintin',
An' withered be the nose that pokes
  Inter the gov'ment printin'!

I du believe thet I should give
  Wut's his'n unto Cæsar,
For it's by him I move an' live,
  Frum him my bread and cheese air;
I du believe thet all o' me
  Doth bear his souperscription—
Will, conscience, honor, honesty,
  An' things o' thet description.

I du believe in prayer an' praise
To him thet hez the grantin'
O' jobs—in everythin' that pays,
But most of all in CANTIN';
This doth my cup with marcies fill,
This lays all thought o' sin to rest—
I don't believe in princerple,
But, O, I du in interest.

I DU believe in Freedom's cause,
Ez fur away as Paris is;
I love to see her stick her claws
In them infarnal Pharisees;
It's wal enough agin a king
To dror resolves an' triggers—
But libbaty's a kind o' thing
Thet don't agree with niggers.

Lowell's *Essays* owed their origin in great part to lectures; they are, consequently, characterized by both the merits and the defects of the spoken word. They are addressed to a limited circle of persons, who are presumably upon a somewhat like level of culture; who, at any rate, are prepared in a certain measure for the subject of the discourse. This often leads the lecturer to content himself with a brief intimation. In the printed essay, which is addressed to the world at large, this brevity sometimes produces an effect of paucity and obscurity.

The humor of the *Essays* becomes ponderous at times by being based too largely upon literary reminiscences and far-fetched allusions. The delicious *Moosehead Journal* (1853), in its present shape, yields ready enjoyment only to the highly educated; had not Lowell, on the very first page, conjured up Virgil, Kenelm Digby, and Empedocles, its fresh, popular tone and its wealth of brilliant fancies would regale thousands of readers. By his dauntless devotion to truth alone, Lowell's literary criticism towers above that worship of success, tending to half-truths and all manner of compromises, which marked the Victorian age. When Carlyle was at the zenith of his fame (1866), Lowell wrote that estimate,* which, with all its urbanity and reverence, made the hollow thunder-din of Carlyle's verbosity ridiculous. In a few delicious epigrams he disposed of the stage-lightning of Carlyle, the supposed demigod. "Mr. Carlyle is for calling down fire from Heaven whenever he cannot readily lay his hand on the match-box."—"Cromwell would have scorned him as a babbler more long-winded than Prynne . . . Friedrich would have scoffed at his tirades as *dummes Zeug*." And the same inexorable

*Literary Essays II, 77 ff.

judge is the most unstinting, the most enthusiastic, admirer of genuine greatness. No German has paid so high a tribute to the genius and character of Lessing as has Lowell; no professional politician has so enthusiastically lauded the civic patriotism of great Americans of the stamp of Josiah Quincy and James Abram Garfield. The delectable and refreshing thing about Lowell is that in spite of his predilection for the utterance of generalizations, which often comes dangerously near to Puritan didacticism, he always remains natural, spontaneous, chatty, playful. When he relates in his "Leaves from My Journal in the Mediterranean," how he made the acquaintance of the Chief Mate, he does not content himself with recounting the fact that the Mate admired his pocket-knife, but (genuine Lowellesque: a little nature, a little human nature, and a great deal of I) he appends a generalization: "I like folks who like an honest bit of steel. . . . There is always more than the average human nature in a man who has a hearty sympathy with iron. It is a manly metal, with no sordid associations like gold and silver." Not exactly new, not astonishing, but individual, spontaneous, convincing. Lowell had a profound sympathy for

the unadulterated soul of the people, for persons in the lowest ranks. His spirit always found repose and refreshment in intercourse with the unlettered, "like what the body feels in cushiony moss." Conversation with people of kindred pursuits he likens to the grinding of the upper and nether millstones, which wear each other smooth. Genuine human nature was always a source of delight to him. He found it "wholesome as a potato, fit company for any dish." His wit rejoiced in the comedy of homely topics. One need only instance his little known but deliciously humorous translation of Prof. F. J. Child's *Il Pesceballo* (The Fishball!), a mock Italian operetta.*

5. KINDRED SPIRITS.—The cosmopolitan tradition of Harvard is represented by other men besides these. Charles Eliot Norton (1827-1908) maintained the relationship with the great men of England. To him we are indebted for the publication of the correspondence between Goethe and Carlyle (1886), the "Letters of J. R. Lowell" (1893), and "The Letters of John Ruskin" (1904).

George Ticknor (1791-1887) wrote "A His-

*Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1862. Reprinted by Thomas B. Mosher, Portland, Maine, 1911.

tory of Spanish Literature" (1849) which has not to this day been surpassed.

Francis James Child (1825-1896) became famous the world over by his monumental work, "English and Scottish Popular Ballads" (1859).

Thomas Wentworth Higginson has a trait in common with the great ones of Harvard—his versatility; and Barrett Wendell is an excellent representative of literary history at the famous seat of learning.

A figure of a peculiar kind of greatness, such as could perhaps be produced on Massachusetts soil alone, is Edward Everett Hale (1822-1909), who did notable work as journalist, story-teller, preacher, historian. By his famous story, "The Man Without a Country," he will perhaps outlive all the celebrities of the day.

CHAPTER VI

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL TALE

1. HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS

BOTH Poe and Hawthorne were affected by the influence of that blood-curdling romanticism which in England, too, had its after-effects up to the middle of the nineteenth century, as is evidenced by Charles Dickens and Emily Brontë. The Americans, however, borrowed only the mood and the technical methods of the blood-curdling romance; of the medieval apparatus—the historical setting and the belief in ghosts—there is not a trace. All the thrills and terrors in Hawthorne and Poe are produced by the dark sides of man's inner life. The problems first presented in artistic form by E. T. A. Hoffman —of dual personality, of the migration of souls, and other questions from the infinite domain of the unconscious and the semi-conscious—have a particular fascination for Hawthorne and Poe.*

*Attention should be drawn to the fact that at the time when Poe and Hawthorne took their themes from the realm of the unconscious, Oliver Wendell Holmes was seeking to illuminate this darkness with his clear understanding.

Hawthorne's journals show in more than one passage that he contemplated for many years making the identity of soul of an English ancestor and his American descendant the subject of a novel, and "The Marble Faun" is essentially a precipitate of that idea. But while Hawthorne, a pronounced rationalist, never abandoned the firm ground of the world of sense, of the perceptible, only toying with spiritualism and mesmerism, Poe has given expression to all occult thoughts, all the twilight states of the soul—analyzed dream and swoon, death and resurrection, mental darkness, and the hallucinations of the criminal. Along with this intense interest in the purely psychological, Poe and Hawthorne had the keenest sense for their material surroundings. What Poe says more than once about his problematic characters applies both to him and to Hawthorne: they possessed a faculty of perception which no detail escaped. This marvelous combination of the keenest perception of the external world with a never-resting dissection of the soul, of a realistic feeling for environment with fancies so far removed from earth, is the distinguishing characteristic of Hawthorne and Poe.

2. POE.—To understand Edgar Allen Poe (1809-1849), it is essential to know the story of his life.

Poe was born in Boston in 1809, but was descended on his father's side from an old and highly respected Maryland family. The grandfather of the poet took a prominent part in the War of Independence and was a friend of Lafayette. The father was not true to type. Instead of studying law, as the family had expected, he went on the stage and married Elizabeth Arnold, an actress of English descent. Edgar was two years old when he lost both his parents. A childless pair in Richmond adopted the little boy. The husband, having occasion to go to London on business, took his wife and the boy with him; thus Edgar was placed in an English school, such as he describes in his story, "William Wilson." Returning to America, he first attended a high school, then the University of Virginia. He was a highly gifted student, not lacking in industry, and was already versed in Latin, French, and Italian literature. But now and then he fell a victim to the demon of play, and outdid his college-mates in drinking as well; by the close of his first and only year at the university he had incurred a gambling

debt of two thousand dollars. His adoptive father put him into business. Poe soon ran away from it. When his money gave out he enlisted as a private soldier, and persevered in the service fully two years, until he was released by his adoptive father, who secured his appointment to the Military Academy at West Point. There he neglected his duties and was ignominiously dismissed (1831). Poe was now entirely dependent upon his pen; from this time to his awful end he is scarcely ever free from want and care. Not that his poetic genius lacked recognition. The gifted novelist, John P. Kennedy, admired him greatly, and made him editor of *The Southern Literary Messenger*. Kennedy had no occasion to regret his choice, for Poe made the journal famous. He had married a cousin, Virginia Clemm, an ideally beautiful girl of thirteen, and he was ecstatically happy. But social dissipation, such as was customary in the luxurious South, robbed him of reputation and bread. Wine was poison to his hypersensitive nerves. After he had been drinking, he was simply sick for days. Thus he lost his position, and he moved with his young wife and her mother, a very fine character—the touching poem, *To My Mother*, is addressed to her—first

to New York, then to Philadelphia, then back again to New York. For years he refrained conscientiously from all alcoholic drinks. All his thoughts were centred at that time upon attaining fame as a writer and providing the comforts of life for a wife whom he idolized. His sensitive temperament, his pride, the consciousness of his superiority to the mediocrity which figures so prominently in the press—all this was not calculated to make friends for him. The year 1845 brought him the coveted renown, for *The Raven* had appeared and was greeted in America and England with a storm of applause. But it came too late. His wife had been a consumptive for years, and Poe suffered daily martyrdom in beholding her struggle with death. After she passed away (1847) there was an end to his self-restraint. He had not even sufficient strength of character to keep the memory of his great love unsullied, but flitted in sentimental amorousness from one woman to another. On the 3rd of October, 1849, he was found unconscious in Baltimore amid the most sordid surroundings; a few days later he died in a hospital.

America, as if somewhat to counterbalance the abnormal realism of the majority, has produced

a number of abnormal visionaries such as perhaps no other country in the nineteenth century can show. Poe, Emerson, Walt Whitman, in spite of their clear, keenly observant vision, go through life as in a dream. And of the three Poe is perhaps the most remote from the material. His imagination is so powerful that it transforms the world of sense into pure fable and symbols, into ideas and arithmetical problems, into poetical tissues. Everything that he sees and experiences subtilizes itself for him into a dreamlike narrative or an ethereal poem. He was about twelve years old when he came across a woodland lake in Scotland. Instantly the dark lake overshadowed by pines appeared to him an Avernus which aroused all the agonies of death within him, and at the same time brought the solace of deliverance from the bondage of intolerable fancies. The poem based upon that experience, *The Lake*, is a marvel of language, melody, and imagination, when one considers the youth of its author, and at the same time it sounds the underlying note of his poetic art. While for other and happier poets—for a Dickens or a Walt Whitman—the world is a fairyland with infinite joys and pleasures, for Poe it is filled with spectres, mortal anguish, the

mouldy odor of the grave. Nowhere else is Poe, the poet, so intense, so true, so compelling, as in that masterly combination of euphony and gruesome imagery which appears for the first time as the story "Ligeia," and as *The Conqueror Worm* in the collected works. Had the death of his parents made so indelible an impression upon the soul of the child of two, or is the germ of this disposition of his mind to be found in his ancestry? Poe's biographers have thus far given no answer to the question.

Narrowness and malice have done much to make difficult the comprehension of Poe's distinctive art. One of the seemingly ineradicable errors, one which, it is true, was furthered by Poe himself, is the view that he was merely a virtuoso, in the sense of the young Romanticists of France, in the sense of the maxim "art for art's sake"; an artist in words pure and simple, as there are artists in color, in marble, in mosaic, in brick, in iron and concrete. Given a certain task and a certain material, the artist produces the required work according to his endowment, without inner experience, without inner compulsion.

The myth, created by Poe himself, that *The Raven* was the result of pure calculation, cold

reflection, and that view of the essence of poetic art which he has repeatedly expressed in his critical essays, explains the origin of this error. Poe's poems did not originate in any such way. Perhaps *The Bells*, possibly *The Raven;* assuredly no other. All of Poe's lyricism has its roots in experience; it is personal, in spite of its semblance of objectivity. The polished verses of *The Conqueror Worm* produce an impression of sententiousness, of universality. What can be more impersonal than the thought of the all-destroyer, Death? And yet even that poem is a personal experience. Poe wrote it at the bedside of his sick wife.

The tales, too, contain far more of the personal than one would suppose. We have, to begin with, the weird fantasy, "Ligeia," with its intricate scrollwork of exotic decoration. One would surmise a reminiscence of the Arabian Nights and of Monk Lewis. But we know that the soul of the narrative, the will to live, flamed daily, hourly, into the poet's sight from the eyes of his dying wife and compelled him to give it embodiment and poetic shape. The same applies to "William Wilson" and other tales.

Poe and Hawthorne developed the short story, introduced into literature by Washington

Irving, to its highest perfection. Hawthorne's tales are essentially the embodiment of a psychological idea, or an allegory; in Poe, on the other hand, three species of stories are to be distinguished:

1. Psychological problems for their own sake.—Such are the tales: "The Pit and the Pendulum," "The Black Cat," "The Facts in the Case of M. Waldemar," "The Cask of Amontillado," "The Fall of the House of Usher," "William Wilson," "Ligeia."

2. Pseudo-scientific phantasies.—Such are: "The Adventures of one Hans Pfaal," "A Descent into the Maëlstrom."

3. Ingenious disentanglements.—These are of two kinds. A seemingly senseless jumble of signs and figures on a scrap of paper is deciphered by the hero of the story as the description of a place where a treasure of tremendous value is hidden. "The Gold Bug" is the typical representative of this species. The second sort is the detective story. The eccentric Parisian, Dupin, with his incomparable gift of analysis, is the hero of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Purloined Letter."

An unparalleled boldness of invention, mas-

terly structure, a compelling logic, are common to all three species. It is a capital observation made by the American professor, Alphonso Smith, a remark that penetrates into the innermost essence of Poe, that his genius was of the architectural order. In his briefest poem, as in his longest tale, everything is characterized by the most perfect harmony; the relation of the individual parts to each other, as well as that of the individual parts to the whole, is ideal. It is all a matter of artistic design, artistic effectiveness—but only to the eye of the reflecting critic; he who reads for enjoyment has not the slightest suspicion of the consciously manipulated technique of the poet, to him all seems spontaneous nature.

Poe's language is elevated throughout, in his prose as well as his verse; in its aversion to all that is vulgar it is even the least bit labored. Be the subject ever so repellent, the situation ever so mean—this can never tempt him to use a coarse word. Where a word of Latin derivation is in rivalry with an Anglo-Saxon one of the same significance, Poe prefers the former. This, strange to say, he has in common with the much-derided rhetoric of his compatriots.

Poe was amazingly well-read and had an ex-

ceptional memory. This accounts for the circumstance that in reading his verse one now and again has an impression of plagiarism.

The last couplet of the first stanza of the poem *For Annie*—

> And the fever called "Living"
> Is conquered at last,

which Longfellow admired so much that he suggested it as an epitaph for the unhappy poet, is a reminder of Shakespeare's "Life's fitful fever."

The effective concluding verse of every stanza in the world-famous poem *The Raven*, with the refrainlike words *more—evermore—nevermore*, had occurred in Longfellow, and in one of the earliest of Lowell's poems (*Threnodia*, 1839).

More striking is the resemblance between the third stanza of the same poem, *The Raven*, and a passage in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Lady Geraldine's Courtship*.

Poe has it:

> And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
> Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before.

The corresponding couplet in Mrs. Browning's poem reads:

With a murmurous stir uncertain, in the air the purple curtain
Swelleth in and swelleth out around her motionless, pale brows.

Nevertheless, one would hesitate to raise the charge of plagiarism against Poe, as he heedlessly did against Longfellow and Aldrich. We know that he was very familiar with Mrs. Browning's poems and that he admired them; it is to her, indeed, that he dedicated the collection *The Raven and other Poems* in almost hyperbolical language. Her words simply came to his pen, without his recognizing them as her property—that was all. It was assuredly not plagiarism, but unconscious reminiscence, for Poe was an extraordinarily well-read man, versed in many domains of literature. One only wonders when and where he read all the long-forgotten, strange books which he cites. The English mystic, Joseph Glanvil, furnishes him with the fundamental idea for the story "Ligeia"; "The Fall of the House of Usher" shows that he was a student of Swedenborg and other occult masters,

not to mention the treatises of natural philosophy to which he is indebted for the material of his pseudo-scientific stories, such as "Hans Pfaal" and "The Descent into the Maëlstrom."

We should have a goodly catalogue were we to name all the literary influences, demonstrated or surmised, to which Poe was subject. Let us mention Schiller, whose *Geisterseher* appeared in the English language, on American soil, as early as 1798. If Poe did not read the famous work, he was certainly familiar with Charles Brockden Brown's imitation, *Wieland.** Then there is E. T. A. Hoffman, to whom Poe owes the impulse of at least five tales;† and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whom Poe cites with the greatest veneration, and whose famous poem, *The Ancient Mariner*, may be regarded as a starting-point for the "Manuscript Found in a Bottle."

Poe's indebtedness to his predecessors becomes altogether a vanishing quantity when one compares it with the debt which the literature of the last sixty years owes to him. Aside

*Walter Just, "Die romantische Bewegung in der Amerikanischen Literatur." Berlin, 1910, p. 26-31.

†Palmer Cobb, "The Influence of E. T. A. Hoffmann on the Tales of Edgar Allen Poe," Chapel Hill, 1908 ("Studies in Philology," Vol. III).

from the imitators of his poetry, the English, the Germans, and the French have been pupils of the story-teller Poe and have won, as disciples of the master, resounding fame in both hemispheres. The Americans Fitz-James O'Brien and Ambrose Bierce, the Englishman, Rudyard Kipling—to name the master of the species in England—the Frenchman Guy de Maupassant, learned the technique of the short story from him. O'Brien's tale, "What Was It?" approached its model very closely, at least so far as the technique is concerned. Ambrose Bierce (born 1842) in his collection of tales, "In the Midst of Life," has pictured the last moments of the dying with fearfully convincing imaginative force. Jules Verne, Curd Laszwitz, and H. G. Wells have imitated the pseudo-scientific cosmic romances; Robert Louis Stevenson has spun the thread of Captain Kidd's hidden treasure further; and Conan Doyle's copy of Poe's Dupin, the now ubiquitous detective genius Sherlock Holmes, has crowded his prototype out of the memory of the world.

3. HAWTHORNE.—Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) was descended from one of the oldest Puritan families in New England and passed his youth in his native town, Salem, amid ultra-

orthodox surroundings.* He was but four years old when his father, a sea captain, died in a foreign land. His training by his mother, a high-minded and keenly sensitive woman, was not conducive to the development of the sturdier fibres in her son. The boy was quiet, self-contained, and much alone. After completing his university studies (1825) he returned home and lived there for twelve years, lost in dreams and in his literary endeavors. From the outside world he held aloof. He made a veritable cult of his seclusion; even his meals he ate alone in his room. He would walk out only after darkness had set in. In his "Note-Books" we find this entry:

"And now I begin to understand why I was imprisoned so many years in this lonely chamber, and why I could never break through the viewless bolts and bars; for if I had sooner made my escape into the world, I should have grown hard and rough . . . by rude encounters with the multitude. But living in solitude till the fulness of time was come, I still kept the dew of my youth and the freshness of my heart."

*He has described Salem in the introduction to the "The Scarlet Letter."

This dream-life came to an end when he fell in love and contemplated marriage. He obtained a position in the Boston custom-house. When after two years another political party came to the helm he, *more Americano*, lost his place, but married, nevertheless (1842), and passed four ideally happy years in Concord, in closest proximity to the Transcendentalists. Again there was a change in political management, and Hawthorne became surveyor of customs at Salem (1846). There he wrote "The Scarlet Letter." In 1853 a friend of his youth who had attained great political power procured him the post of consul at Liverpool, where he remained four years. He also enjoyed the privilege of a well-nigh two years' sojourn in France and Italy. Then he returned to his native land and died.

The germ of every tale of Hawthorne's is a psychological problem. Action, local color, details—all these occupy a secondary place. His "Note-Books" give us unequivocal evidence of this. "A change from a gay young girl to an old woman; the melancholy events, the effects of which have clustered around her character, and gradually imbued it with their influence, till she becomes a lover of sick chambers, taking

pleasure in receiving dying breaths and laying out the dead; also having her mind full of funeral reminiscences, and possessing more acquaintances beneath the burial turf than above it."* This idea was carried out in "Edward Fane's Rosebud."

"To represent the process by which sober truth gradually strips off all the beautiful draperies with which imagination has enveloped a beloved object, till from an angel she turns out to be a merely ordinary woman."† This likewise was carried out, at least in part, in *Mrs. Bullfrog.*

That Hawthorne's delight in psychological studies is, in its ultimate essence, of a Puritanic-spiritualist nature and not the instinctive gratification of a bent for analysis, is shown, in the first place, by the fact that the Calvinist bogy of guilt and sin furnishes him with his most powerful motifs; furthermore, by the circumstance that in his "Note-Books" he just as frequently sketches plots for parables and allegories—naturally with a decidedly didactic tendency. "A snake taken into a man's stomach and nourished there from fifteen years to

*"American Note-Books," I, 9.

†*Ibid.*, p. 11.

thirty-five, tormenting him most horribly. A type of envy or some other evil passion." "Two lovers to plan the building of a pleasure house on a certain spot of ground, but various seeming accidents prevent it. Once they find a group of miserable children there; once it is the scene where crime is plotted; at last the dead body of one of the lovers or of a dear friend is found there . . . The moral. . . ." "To describe a boyish combat with snowballs, and the victorious leader to have a statue of snow erected to him. A satire on ambition and fame. . . ."

Of course it is difficult to say how much of this inclination to allegory is a Puritan inheritance, how much literary borrowing; for we know from Hawthorne's biography as well as from his "Note-Books" that not only Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," but also Spenser's "Faerie Queene," had made a most profound impression upon him.

But literary influence is far less noticeable in Hawthorne than in Poe. Anton Schönbach justly rejects the view expressed by Poe that Tieck served Hawthorne as a model. On the other hand, it may be assumed with a certain degree of confidence that he is indebted to Bal-

zac, at least for growth in the direction which he had marked out for himself.

Hawthorne's masterpiece is the historical tale, "The Scarlet Letter," a story of three human beings with scarcely any outward incident. A young and beautiful woman, full of life, is put into the pillory in the Puritan town of Salem, and condemned to wear the letter A (signifying adulteress) on her breast in scarlet embroidery visible to all; for she has given birth to a girl, although her husband, the aged Dr. Prynne, had not been heard of for years. Her punishment proves all the heavier since, in spite of all the pressure that is brought to bear on her, she refuses to reveal the name of her partner in guilt. She is expelled from the community of the pious and moves into a cottage remote from the town, away by the sea, where she supports herself and her singularly beautiful and uncommonly capricious child with handiwork; she is a mistress in the art of the needle. Gradually people accustom themselves to her guilt and the flaming sign upon her breast; for Hester Prynne is quiet and inoffensive, but ever ready to help where she is needed in want and sickness.

On the very day that she stood in the pillory

there appeared in the settlement a little old man, Roger Chillingworth, who had long lived among the savages and learned from them the healing powers of plants. He is very welcome to the Puritans. The old man strives to win the friendship of Dimmesdale, the minister, who, though a young man, is universally reverenced for his piety and learning. Dimmesdale at first repels the advances of the strange and uncanny-looking physician, but finally succumbs to his persistence and his more powerful will. They move into the same house, ostensibly because the minister, who daily grows paler and thinner, is in need of a watchful doctor in his immediate neighborhood. Thus the old man is enabled not only to observe Dimmesdale at all hours of the day and night, but to make him talk, even against his will. The old man is, of course, the husband of the adulteress, and his revenge consists in his gloating daily and hourly over the anguish of Hester, who at once recognized him, and the tortured conscience of the noble-minded minister. Dimmesdale atones for his passion like a saint, and is wrecked by his sin. Hester, however, triumphs over the vindictiveness of her tormentor by continuing to an advanced old age her labors of love

among her fellow-creatures; enjoying well-earned respect and honor in spite of the scarlet letter.

Thus there is scarcely any action, nothing but inward experience. Nevertheless, "The Scarlet Letter" is the greatest novel, artistically, in American literature. This is due, above all, to the sure touch with which the best means are employed to produce the intended effect. Hawthorne sees his characters as if he had them bodily before him, and his delineation is so careful, so true to life, that he compels us to see them with his eyes. Not a single trait is to be found that is not in keeping with the character, not a single word that we feel to be superfluous. All is as if cast in bronze.

For Americans and Englishmen the work has besides its purely poetic value still another significance, in that it represents the essence of the Puritan spirit, without any historical lessons, without a mass of external details. The entire atmosphere is filled with Calvinistic views, without the author thinking it necessary so much as once to explain those views, as other delineators of that time have done, Harriet Beecher Stowe for example. The German reader does not bring this historic interest to bear upon

the novel; the effect upon him is more unalloyed—that of a work of art pure and simple.

Hawthorne's second novel dealing with Puritan surroundings, "The House of the Seven Gables," has found more readers but fewer admirers. The gloom of the old house and its inmates is illuminated by the rosy youth of the maiden from the country, and in spite of the sad figures of the old judge and the anæmic Hepzibah with her inflexible patrician pride, the sunshine of a redeeming humor hovers over the whole.

The other novels of Hawthorne are as good as forgotten to-day, even in America.

4. JAMES AND HOWELLS.—It is a long way from Poe and Hawthorne to James and Howells, and it is customary, in histories of American literature, to keep the two pairs pretty carefully apart by broad streams flowing between. And yet, psychologically considered, they belong together. What binds them together is not only the combination of the study of the soul with realism, but also literary tradition.

Henry James (born 1843), who years ago wrote, not very sympathetically, of the life and work of Hawthorne, would perhaps object to the honor of being classed as a fellow-artist with

Poe and Hawthorne; the European, the man of the world, and the humorist in him would protest against a spiritual kinship with the New England recluse and moralist Hawthorne. And yet they belong together, for both cultivated the same species of art—the psychological novel. In the choice of matter alone do they differ entirely—a natural result of the different circumstances of their lives. Henry James left his native town, New York, in his twelfth year, and returned to America only for the short period of his university studies, and after that always merely as a fleeting guest. He feels at ease in France and Italy; in England he is perfectly at home. This explains why he prefers to select his men and women among travellers, among the most restless people of our time, who, a fructifying stream of gold, annually pour over Europe from the western shores of the Atlantic. His heroes and heroines are almost always of the New World, but we make their acquaintance in Switzerland (Daisy Miller), in England (Isabel Archer), in Italy, in France (The Americans)—everywhere, only not in their own home.

James began as a disciple and imitator of Hawthorne. Tales like "The Madonna of the Future" and "A Passionate Pilgrim" are psy-

chological problems with an allegorical core, like most of Hawthorne's "Twice-Told Tales." But James swiftly ends his apprenticeship, and soon discovers his own art.

Henry James, son and grandson of gentlemen and scholars, is an embodied protest against the vulgar misuse of language which celebrates its triumphs in the rhetoric characteristic of a certain portion of the trans-Atlantic press.

Polysyllabic words of Latin origin, prolixity, circumlocution, crass exaggeration, sensationalism, constant striving for crude effects, hurrah-patriotism, fawning upon the mob, a mania for quotation, predilection for the commonplace of the school of Martin Tupper, false sentimentality, complacent philistinism—James abhors these abominations with all his soul. And in his hatred of this crudity and flatness of provincial authorship, his ideal of art is to keep aloof as far as possible not only from the common, but also from the popular, from the obvious, and likewise from the readily comprehensible. He has such contempt for the piling up of incidents that, where possible, he eliminates action altogether. Psychological analysis and mastery of the art of words are to him the only legitimate resources of the writer of fiction.

William Dean Howells, too (born 1837), who started out with journalistic writing and betrays his practice as a reporter in many of his novels, sedulously avoids any unusual incidents and seeks to gain the reader's interest exclusively by character study and style.

The distinguishing characteristic of James and Howells is "finesse." The reader to whom their figures would appeal must be prepared to solve psychological problems, enigmas of character. They themselves only furnish the material in a certain way. They exhibit a man or a woman in daily life—show us how they eat and drink, pay visits and talk, how they go about their work and pass their leisure hours. In the midst of these everyday occurrences a fateful situation is evolved—what he or she will do in that juncture signifies a decision affecting their whole future: how will he, how will she, decide? In the case of every other story-teller one can predict with a great degree of probability what the decision will be—with James never, rarely with Howells. The women, particularly, are inscrutable to the average intelligence. The story "Daisy Miller," by James—which, by the way, is the most perfect work of his pen and a prime illustration of the nature of his art—and

"Miss Bellard's Inspiration," by Howells, are excellent examples of how these writers maintain to the end the reader's tense interest in their psychological riddles.

"Daisy Miller," regarded as a portrait—this is admitted by all of James's critics, even those adversely inclined—is unsurpassed in American literature. The young American girl, who, without culture, almost without education, understands the art of dressing like a lady of the best society, and who accepts the homage of the male world like a born princess, as a fitting tribute; who allows herself all sorts of liberties without ever compromising herself, who defies and torments the man she loves because his spiritual superiority oppresses her—this study of a woman really comprehends all the psychological art that has made James famous; only the colors are fresher, the lines more vigorous, the whole a youthful inspiration.

Undiscerning critics, to whom the suggestive art of this novelist does not appeal, have found Daisy Miller's attitude toward her admirers enigmatical, her early death in Rome forced, the dénouement unsatisfactory. Henry James has no doubt smilingly thought to himself regarding such censors: "My dear sir, I did not

write this story for you; you are a reader after Martin Tupper's and Marie Corelli's own heart."

Of the longer stories the three-volume novel entitled "The Portrait of a Lady," in spite of the thread of the story being, on the whole, too long drawn-out, contains a number of characters that are simply unforgettable; above all, the "lady" herself, Isabel Archer, again an American, but this time (in contrast with Daisy Miller) an over-refined spirit that is almost wrecked by her over-refinement.

The literary ideal of this group is expressed by Howells in few words:

"I wonder," says a Bostonian who is fascinated by Quebec's picturesque charms, "Quebec isn't infested by artists the whole summer long. They go about hungrily picking up bits of the picturesque along our shores and country roads when they might exchange their famine for a feast by coming here."

"I suppose," replies the heroine of the story, "there's a pleasure in finding out the small graces and beauties of the poverty-stricken subjects, that they wouldn't have in better ones, isn't there? At any rate, if I were to write a story, I should want to take the slightest sort of plot, and lay the scene in the dullest kind of place,

and then bring out all their possibilities. I'll tell you a book after my own heart: 'Details'—just the history of a week in the life of some young people who happen together in an old New England country house; nothing extraordinary, little, everyday things told so exquisitely, and all fading naturally away without any particular result, only the full meaning of everything brought out."*

It often results from this self-conscious art that the artist, in his effort not to be dominated by matter, commits the mistake of renouncing matter altogether—of wishing to make bricks with neither loam nor straw.

*"A Chance Acquaintance," Boston, 1874, p. 164.

CHAPTER VII

THE HUMORISTS

1. GENERAL.—No species of literature is represented in America with such richness, variety, completeness, and brilliancy as that shown in its humor. Humorists of genius and esprit, who turn to this subtlest form of art, like Oliver Wendell Holmes, and are satisfied if their whimsical words elicit a smile; popular humorists, who pre-suppose in their readers no more than a little knowledge of human nature, and provoke bursts of laughter, like Mark Twain; humorists who appeal to the boisterousness latent in us all, like Artemus Ward, and tickle us with the rudest devices of a clown, so that we roar—all these are found in greater abundance in American literature than in that of any other country.

2. REFINED HUMOR.—Refined humor finds its highest literary expression in "elegant" poetry, in the so-called *vers de société*, or, as the Americans prefer to call it, familiar

verse,* which occupies about the same place in poetry that still-life or genre pictures do in painting. The master of this species, as Locker-Lampson declares, is Oliver Wendell Holmes, and as examples of this kind we may designate his exquisite poems *Contentment, To an Insect, The Last Leaf, On Lending a Punch-Bowl, Bill and Joe, Dorothy Q.*†

John Godfrey Saxe (1816-1887) leans too much upon the English poet Praed‡, but surpasses his prototype through his American vivacity; *The Mourner à la Mode, The Heart and the Liver, Little Jerry, My Familiar, Early Rising, The Pedagogue,* are most deserving of mention.

To Henry Cuyler Bunner (1855-1896), who conducted *Puck* for a number of years, we are indebted—besides his lively prose sketches which link him with the short-story writers—for a number of *vers de société: The Way to Arcady, Candor, The Chaperon, Forfeits, Poetry and the Poet.*

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*The character of this peculiar species, little regarded in German literary criticism, is discussed at length by Frederick Locker-Lampson in the introduction to his anthology Lyra Elegantiarum (Kellner, Die Englische Literatur im Zeitalter der Königin Viktoria, p. 171), and by Brander Matthews, "American Familiar Verse," p. 1-28.

†On Oliver Wendell Holmes, see above 1, Chap. 5.

‡Kellner, loc. cit. p. 163.

Out of the great mass of poets who, after Holmes, cultivated this species, Eugene Field (1850-1895) towers head and shoulders above the rest; a journalist, a newspaper poet, so to speak, such as, in point of versatility, richness, and individuality no country but America has thus far produced. The whole phenomenon is so new in literature, so characteristically American, that it is worth while to analyze it.

Field brought to his calling a classical education, gained in high school and university. He served an apprenticeship upon little provincial papers, until the editor of the *Daily News* of Chicago offered him a position on the editorial staff, where he was to write humorous verse as a "specialty." The poems attained a rare popularity and were repeatedly published in book form: "Culture's Garland" (1887), "A Little Book of Western Verse" (1889), "With Trumpet and Drum" (1892), "Second Book of Verse" (1893), "Echoes from a Sabine Farm" (1893), and others.*

He can accommodate himself to anything, no

*In "The Poems of Eugene Field," complete edition, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911, the best poems are collected in convenient form.

species is impossible to him. He is bound by only one trammel: the poem must not transcend the limits of a feuilleton. We may not, therefore, look for an epic poem from his pen—otherwise every poetical species is represented by him. He has little lyrics that almost sing themselves, which remind one of Burns; drinking songs; verses of his married life, springing from genuine, deep emotion; ballads; parodies; elegant *vers de société;* masterly translations of Horatian odes, and—hymns.

Everywhere the same ease and smoothness, everywhere an ordinary vocabulary, at most the exploiting of an antique orthography and of a few familiar archaisms. All men of considerable talent, indeed, are at home in the older English literature; some, like Eugene Field, imitate without difficulty the ballads of the fourteenth century.* The astonishing thing about it is that such literary delicacies are understood and appreciated by the public at large.

Eugene Field is the genuine humorist by grace of God. He is endowed with the rare gift of

*Cf. *Madge the Hoyden, A Proper Trewe Idyll of Camelot* (the last verse alone contains the satirical fling at Chicago), *The Ballad of the Taylor Pup.*

making merry over himself, of bestowing a compassionate smile upon his own foibles and mishaps, and thus robbing them of all the unloveliness of everyday things. He was fond of a good glass of wine, perhaps even a glass too much; and he was not averse to a dainty dish, either, which compelled him later to do penance at Karlsbad. But how cheerful sounds the psalm of penance from the Bohemian Mecca, with the refrain:

> When you were weighing twenty stone and
> I weighed ten stone three—

or the merry poem of the bottle of wine and the tender roast chicken, or the still merrier one of the "pneumogastric nerve," or the hymn of the "delicious roast beef."

He is a bibliomaniac. He dotes, above all, upon old pigskin-covered tomes of all ages and climes. They crowd out from his heart not only his friends but also the young ladies. Books are like women—pleasing to the eye, they incite to purchase, and they are of every size and kind. He didn't care for a folio, only a middle-sized, bonnie octavo, full of verse and prose, with an occasional happy idea, with variety for body and soul.

Revolt against a style that servilely follows English models, a style that anxiously avoids any native individuality, set in at an early stage of American literature; the bold introduction of dialect into literature (by Lowell and Holmes) is the most marked expression of that emancipation.

But in the last quarter of the nineteenth century the intimate intercourse between the wealthy classes of England and America resulted in America's once more falling under the yoke of English society. Against this Eugene Field stood on his guard, in his humorous way, by defending the old shibboleth of American individuality, "I guess," against the English idiom, "I fancy."

The old Puritan trust in God, which in its ultimate analysis is nothing but a trust in one's own strength, and the Titanic defiance which conquers Fate because it looks upon the worst, upon Death, with fearless eyes, is met with, even among the most worldly of American poets —the newspaper poets. Verses like the short poem of two stanzas, *Contentment*, by Eugene Field, show that the chase after the dollar, the corruption of cities, the shortcomings in governmental administration, the irresponsibility

of those in authority, are transitory, because superficial, phenomena: the marrow of the "nation," as the United States terms itself by preference, is of an indestructible Puritan soundness.

Eugene Field's dialect poems of the West remind one by their rhythm, and their diction in general, of Kipling's *Barrack-Room Ballads*. Which of the two has the priority?

A former gold-seeker revels in remembrance of the days "When the money flowed like likker, and the folks wuz good and true."

The children's poems lack the originality, the freshness, of a natural growth; most of them give evidence of effort, of having been made at the desk. In the Armenian, the Sicilian, the Jewish cradle songs, we see the poet supporting his head on his left arm and cudgeling his brains. I do not think it is going too wide of the mark to assume that Robert Louis Stevenson's child verses incited the American to follow his example.

Of wit there is almost none, and hardly any playing upon words; but the most refreshing and delicate humor, whose geniality is not a whit lessened by the admixture of a grain of harmless irony.

Darts of satire we occasionally find, but they

are never very sharply pointed, never poisoned. The sally against Longfellow in the poem, *Peter Vogel*, is an illustration:

This is the legend of old, told in the tumtitty metre
Which the great poets prefer, being less labor than rhyming
(My first attempts at the same, my last attempt, too, I reckon).

Humor of the most delightful sort is manifested in tales like "Marjorie Daw," by Aldrich; "Pomona's Novel," "The House of Martha," by Stockton; " The Pursuit of the Piano," by Howells. A conceit, a whim, a mood is carried out to its utmost conclusion, regardless of reality and probability—this produces capriccios of the most airy, the merriest, most innocent nature. The art of this species of humor consists primarily in lulling us gently into a dreamy state, in consigning the laws of gravity to oblivion; if the humorist has brought us to this point, it is easy for him to carry us along in his excursions into the realms of the fantastic.

"The House of Martha," by Stockton, may be taken as an example. The narrator—it is noteworthy that this type of humor prefers the use of the first person—has spent a whole year

in Europe. His travels in England, France, Italy, were experiences which produced a most enduring effect. When he returns to his American nest and begins to speak of his impressions, people run away from him or interrupt him with talk about their local trivialities. The traveller thus makes the astounding discovery that the ears of the modern man are not intended for hearing, but serve rather as spies and watchers of the tongue, to descry a pause in the talk of others: presto! the tongue leaps into the breach and makes itself mistress of the situation. "Modern conversation has degenerated into the Italian game of moccaletti, in which every one endeavors to blow out the candles of the others, and keep his own alight." What resource is left to the traveller under such circumstances but to hire a listener? After a number of futile attempts he procures the right man and passes most enjoyable hours with him.

That is the introduction; the humorist has expended the greatest care upon it, for it is decisive of the fate of his book. The heavy, refractory reader, who will not allow the suggestion of a joke, lays the book down after the first few pages; spirits of a lighter calibre, on the contrary, have been adequately hypnotized by the

introduction; nothing on the part of this European traveller who hires a listener can any longer astonish them. The love story which now follows between the amiable visionary and his amanuensis is no longer a struggle against probability and reason, but a charming extravaganza.

The inoffensive presentation, too, of the foreign, semi-Americanized element belongs to this sort of subtle humor. The model of this species was furnished by Charles Godfrey Leland (1824-1903)—who, like Bayard Taylor, had lived a great deal abroad and had the keenest appreciation of German literature*—in the "Hans Breitmann's Ballads."

The poems commemorate Hans Breitmann and his heroic deeds in all situations of life, as peaceful citizen, as patriotic warrior, as father of the Fatherland. The heroic poems are extremely popular in America and England. The poet first introduces his hero to us when, as a loyal adopted son of the North American Republic, he goes to battle against the rebellious Southern States. Since the battles of 1848 his sword has been rusting; now he girds up his loins, mounts a charger, and rides at the head of a brave band

*He made Heine and Victor Scheffel familiar in America.

of compatriots to meet the foe. Forthwith he encounters a cavalry detachment from Texas, whose leader, a young German, challenges him to combat. After a genuinely epic exchange of scornful speeches in the style of the Old German poem of Hildebrand and Hadubrand, they engage in a terrible fight, in which the old man vanquishes the young one. He has lifted his arm for the fatal blow, when he suddenly changes his mind and asks his beaten opponent:

Pelievst du in Moral Idees. If so I let you free.

But no, the lad knows nothing, alas, about morality, for since the time when, still a boy, he lost his father Breitmann, he has received no instruction of any kind. Whereupon the old man:

Und war dy fader Breitmann? Bist du sein kit und kin?
Dann know dat ich der Breitmann, dein lieber vater bin.

But in spite of all his joy, Hans Breitmann cannot refrain from a slight suspicion. When he left his wife he knew nothing of his paternal bliss! It is only when the meeting is celebrated over lager beer, and the lad quickly empties a

barrel instead of a beaker, that the old man cries enthusiastically:

> Bei Gott dat settles all dis dings—
> I know du bist mein Sohn.

Hans Breitmann distinguishes himself by bravery in the war on every occasion, and the reckless daring, in particular, with which he captures a brewery garrisoned by five hundred rebels, is admired throughout the land; as a reward the hero, crowned with fame, is nominated by his compatriots as a member of Congress. The appeal to the voters is composed in conjunction with Dr. Emsig Grübler,

> Who in Jena once studiert;

it contains six great moral ideas. Old Grübler constructs them with artistic gradation, the last and best appropriately crowning the rhetorical-philosophical edifice:

> Die sechste greate Moral Idee:
> Since it very well is known
> Dat mind is de result of food,
> As der Moleschott has shown,
> Und as mind is de highest form of God,
> As in Fichte tut appear—
> He must always go mit de Barty
> Dat go for Lager-bier.

In consonance with these philosophical principles there is a big barrel in the polling-place; every voter gets

Of allerbest Markgräfler Wein
Dazu zwölf Gläser Bock.

Breitmann keeps on continuously with his election speech, which is received with enthusiasm and consists exclusively of two sentences:

Zapfet aus!
Schenket ein!

The moral ideas assist Breitmann in obtaining an immense majority over his Anglo-Saxon rival; the victory is, of course, fittingly celebrated over the lager beer, and the hero of the day is modest enough to recognize in his triumph the triumph of the German spirit, the superiority of the world-conquering intelligence of the Germans over that of the English. He demonstrates to his hearers the simple, yet thus far generally misunderstood, truth that America belongs by rights to the Germans, for the discoverer of the new world was by origin a German!

For as his name was Colon
It visibly tut shine
Dat his elders are geboren been
In Cologne an dem Rhein.
Und Colonia war a Colonie,
Daher es leicht bemerkbar ist,
Dass Columbus in Amerika
War der erste Colonist.

And, above all, the world-redeeming German philosophy! No people can boast of philosophical systems so profound and unfathomable that their discoverers themselves do not comprehend them; Germany alone can point to such heroes:

As der Hegel sagt of his system
Dat only one man knew
Wat der teufel it meant;
Und der Jean Paul Richter too,
Who said: God knows I meant somedings
When erst this buch I writ,
But God only knows wat dat buch means now
For I have forgotten it.

A man who can boast of such countrymen naturally makes his way in politics, and if genuine merit continues to be appreciated in America in the future, then Hans Breitmann will some fine day become President.

3. THE HUMOR OF EXAGGERATION.—The second sort of humor, which provokes us to hearty laughter—such as the humor of Washington Irving in his "History of New York," to cite the oldest example—and which is essentially based upon exaggeration, is likewise very abundantly represented in American literature. That exaggeration is the essence of a certain type of American humor is unhesitatingly admitted by the Americans themselves, and was recognized as far back as fifty years ago by Gladstone, to whom we are indebted for the following example of American exaggeration: A firm in America which plumed itself upon its enormous business, found that its expenses increased too rapidly, and decided, from considerations of economy, that it should use less ink for its business correspondence. A shareholder proposed that the dot on the "i" be omitted. The suggestion was followed, and at the close of the year the firm reported a net saving of a hundred thousand dollars.

Exaggeration would not amuse were it not an ingredient of the American character; it is this circumstance that makes it available for the humorist's purposes, for it supplies the spice of self-mockery. The following conceit in an Amer-

ican newspaper made the rounds of the entire press: "Has it occurred to you, Mr. Chairman, that the cotton cloth that is annually manufactured in South Carolina would make a bedspread large enough to cover the whole surface of America and Europe, and that it would, besides, hang over the toes of Asia? And, sir, if all the cattle that are annually raised in South Carolina were a single cow, she could feast upon the vegetation of the equator while her tail would strip the icicles from the North Pole. Her milk would furnish a whole ship's load of butter and cheese, to be transported from Charleston to New York. If all the mules that we breed every year were a single mule, he could consume the entire annual production of corn of North Carolina at a single meal, and could pluck out the spot from the sun with his hind feet without shaking his flank or wagging his tail. If all the pigs that we raise annually were a single pig, it could dig the Panama Canal with three movements of its snout, and its grunting would be so loud that the cocoanuts would drop from the trees throughout Central America."

The chief representative of this species of humor in America is "Mark Twain"—Samuel Langhorne Clemens—(1835-1910). Born in the

village of Florida, Missouri, he was thrown upon his own resources at an early age, and earned his living first as a compositor, then upon a Mississippi steamer, until he discovered his literary gift.

A light-hearted fellow, brimful of roguishness without a grain of malice, a merry-andrew who is ready every instant to conjure up something before his own and others' eyes without, in doing so, ever making an approach to truth; a visionary and star-gazer who never loses sight of the earth under his feet; a vagabond and adventurer who remains a gentleman from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, and, with the grandiose mien of a Walter Scott, retains his commercial honor unblemished—that is the writer, Mark Twain, and the citizen, Samuel Langhorne Clemens, in one. We know enough of Mark Twain's life to understand the author of "Tom Sawyer" and "Huckleberry Finn"; but even if nothing of the days of his childhood and youth had penetrated to the public, any literary novice could easily have inferred the author from his works. In this humorist truth and fiction are intimately blended. The sleepy little town on the Mississippi where Tom Sawyer performed his heroic feats is Florida, where

Mark Twain was born, but, to the despair of his parents, not educated; the pious, kind-hearted Aunt Polly, who labors in vain to make a decent scholar of the harebrained truant, is his own mother, who never lost faith in her troublesome child, even after his teacher and his own father had given him up. And more even than outward circumstances and happenings does Tom Sawyer reveal the inmost soul of the future globe-trotting bohemian, the ungovernable impulse for freedom, the yearning for distant scenes, the vague presentiment of a stirring future, the childish consciousness of superior power. How after the death of his father he, a lad of twelve, obtained employment with a newspaper, which he retained for three years, fetching water from the village pump, sweeping the office and delivering the papers; how after this strenuous apprenticeship he threw up the job and started out with twelve whole dollars in his pocket, to try his luck in New York; how, sobered and disappointed, he returned to the Mississippi, took charge of his education himself, and really learned the business of river piloting; how, in the silence of the night, under the deep blue vault of heaven, he discovered his vocation, and the archaic seaman's cry "Mark

Twain!" (the leadsman's phrase for two fathoms of water) suggested his nom-de-plume—all this he has himself related in the simple and, perhaps for that reason, the most impressive way. That he did not persevere long as a pilot on the Mississippi, but tried his hand at writing in the West; that he led a life of adventure as a gold-digger with Bret Harte—a congenial companion, yet fundamentally different from himself—and after all sorts of frustrated hopes finally and definitively joined the writers' guild; these things may be gleaned from his sketches. His happy marriage and beautiful family life the Viennese learned to know with their own eyes in the winter of 1898-9.

For decades Mark Twain's name was connected with the story of the celebrated *Jumping Frog*, as in England and America up to the present Schiller's name calls up *Die Räuber*, as though "Wallenstein" and "Wilhelm Tell" had never been written. But *The Jumping Frog* exhibits only one side of the humorist, the most prominent, the most obvious one, his consummate descriptive talent. A loafer in a certain gold-mining camp, who is an inveterate better, has trained a frog, as well as some other creatures, and offers to bet all comers that said frog can

beat any other frog in the world at jumping. And he always wins. One day he happens to meet a newly arrived stranger and offers him the usual bet. The artless-looking stranger is willing, for he cannot, he says, discover any special jumping muscles in the celebrated frog. Now, while the owner of the jumping frog is away looking for an ordinary frog in the nearest swamp, the wily stranger pours a load of buck-shot into the jumping frog's body and wins. By the time the infuriated trainer discovers the fraud, the cunning fellow has vanished. This is the whole point of the story through which Mark Twain introduced himself into literature, and through which he gained a foremost place in the throng of American humorists. Strange, is it not? Well, the fact is that it is vain to attempt to retell a story of Mark Twain's, for he is not a wit, but a humorist. As far as I know he never made a witticism, not even a pun; and puns, owing to the numerous significations of English words, naturally enter most commonly and readily into Anglo-Saxon humor; even Dickens, who never made a good witticism, succeeds in making very acceptable puns, and in James Payn they are as thick as raisins in a Christmas pudding. Mark Twain produces his

effects solely by his humor. Only a German should not for a moment think of trying to fit Jean Paul's, Friedrich Schlegel's, or Vischer's definition of humor to this peculiar American product; even the comparatively simple qualities demanded of humor in Lazarus' *Leben der Seele* must not be looked for. If it had occurred to any one to bring the profound researches of those thinkers to bear upon the works of the American humorist, it would indeed have been a grateful return gift of the Germans to the old man, for it would have furnished him royal sport.

"The spirit of humor," says Lazarus, "sees itself and its actual life remote from their idea, powerless to attain their ends and its intent, consequently subdued and crushed and often condemned to the despairing derision of self-contempt; and, on the other hand, uplifted and purified by the consciousness of possessing and dominating the idea (and the infinite) despite everything, and of presenting and living it, though in ever so imperfect a form, and of being one with it in its deepest essence, if only through the knowledge gained from it and the painful sense of imperfection," etc.

Shall we actually try to apply this analysis

of humor to the *Jumping Frog*, or to the scene where Tom Sawyer obtains the prize for Bible study? Let us first have the facts. The reward for reciting two verses perfectly consisted in a little blue slip, upon which was printed a passage from the Bible. Ten blue slips could be exchanged for a red one, ten red ones for a yellow one. For ten yellow ones the pupil received from the parson a small cheap-looking Bible which among brethren was worth about forty cents. Only the oldest and most sedate pupils had the persistence to accumulate so many slips and obtain the ardently longed-for prize. The lazy rogue, Tom Sawyer, was ambitious of such a distinction, not, of course, for the sake of the shabby copy of the Bible, but on account of the splendor connected with the ceremony. But where to obtain the necessary slips? Now he had not gathered Bible verses in his brain, but precious objects in his pocket, such as licorice, fishing-hooks, marbles, and other treasures. These he traded off very skilfully to his honest schoolmates, and he succeeded in defrauding them of so many slips that on the day of the distribution of prizes, to the astonishment of the parson, he claimed the reward for industry and perseverance; and owing to the presence

of the district judge he actually obtained it without opposition. Unfortunately, the district judge was too highly delighted with the recipient of the prize and was anxious to learn from him the names of the first two apostles. The parson's heart sank into his boots, Tom Sawyer grew redder and redder, but as the district judge would by no means desist, he burst out with "David and Goliath."

Now has any one the courage to apply Lazarus's theory of humor to these two little stories? No; the very first element in Mark Twain's humor is the human, the only too human, delight in the weakness, perversity, folly, of a beloved fellow-creature. And the more directly we are made to realize that weakness, perversity, folly, the greater is our enjoyment. We decent, well-bred people do not wish harm to any fellow-creature, Heaven forbid! We should be quite horrified, cold shudders would run up and down our back, if the elegant gentleman who slipped on the slimy November pavement broke his leg; but if his brand-new stovepipe lies in the gutter, and its owner turns it about in his finely gloved hands, we onlookers cannot suppress a smile. A smile, be it remarked, most fleeting, lasting but an instant;

but in that instant we were unconscionable rogues, untamed rascals checked by no altruistic sentiments. One dare not breathe this—but it is an inexpressible pleasure: for the space of an instant we felt freed from the chains which innumerable thousands of years of social intercourse have forged about our innate savagery.

This is, of course, but one of the elements in the humor of our American; and it is free to every truly good man (for instance to one who cannot even so much as smile at the mishap of the elegant gentleman) to seek out in his jokes the metaphysical contradiction between the idea and the reality. But wherever he produces gross effects by gross means it is unnecessary to look for deeper explanations. We are confirmed in this view if we notice that we are most stirred to laughter when the dupe tells the story in the first person, thus reaping scorn in addition to injury. Mark Twain is particularly addicted to this form, and happy in the use of it. All the far-famed stories of the watch that runs perfectly for a hundred and fifty years, until it falls into the ungodly hands of the watchmaker; of the writer who is called in the midst of a profoundly erudite essay to have lightning-rods set up on his house; of the husband whose wife

has a dread of storms and children's diseases; of the journalist who goes to Tennessee to improve his health—from the crudest horseplay to the subtlest, keen-edged satire, he has not disdained to flatter us with our superiority, and to exploit, in just sufficient measure, our capacity for taking pleasure in other people's mischances. Mastery of the art of description is a matter of course in the case of a great humorist; and his most telling effects are grounded in the pleasure we derive from mimicry. Here Mark Twain is the king of humorists. In three sentences he projects a character outlined with perfect clearness. And what a gallery of paintings of contemporary American life did he produce in the forty years of his activity as an author! All strata, all callings, all climes, all temperaments and destinies are represented in him. The pompous senator is not spared, the poor nigger Jim not forgotten.

This is the chief reason why to foreigners Mark Twain comes so much closer than do the more recent American humorists, who surpass him, perhaps, in keenness and wit; the reason why Germans in particular regard him almost as one of their own; I believe no English or American writer of to-day has found as many trans-

lators and publishers in Germany. Our American, in his fine humanity, in his idealism, in his gentleness, is almost an old-fashioned gentleman. It is a pity that the Puritan spirit, which still prevailed in the home of Mark Twain's parents, is dying out. True enough, it often produced blind zealots, intolerable pedants. But where the Puritan shoot encountered the suitable psychical disposition, we had a Lincoln, an Emerson, an Oliver Wendell Holmes, a Mark Twain. Mark Twain did not study his Bible versesin the Sunday-school, but he absorbed and carried with him into life the Biblical ideal of the children of one God, the faith in right and justice. Whether this ancient ideal, the growth of a distant soil, is, as our supermen tell us, an *ignis fatuus*, the near future will teach us; in countries of the Anglo-Saxon tongue it has, always up to the present at any rate, proved a trustworthy pole-star.

Sensitive natures have taken exception to Mark Twain's grotesque exaggeration, and, on account of this characteristic, have set his humor down as of a low order. This judgment is based on a misunderstanding. Exaggeration is not an essential trait of his humor, even if it aids it in its broadest effects; but subjectively

it can not be dissociated from Mark Twain's whole art as a writer. His countryman, the physiologist, Oliver Wendell Holmes—far too little known among us—divides mankind somewhere into microscopic and telescopic natures. Writers like Dickens and Mark Twain require in their lives, as in their presentations, enormous dimensions. Both always craved space, distance, new lands; both passed half their lives in wanderings, and both indulged in boundless exaggeration. What is odd about it is that Dickens in his descriptions of travel in America covers the exaggeration of the Yankees with ridicule, not suspecting that by it the exuberance of the young giant stood revealed, just as was the case with himself. The younger writers of America no longer give occasion for such reproach; on the other hand, their humor has become so measured, so fine spun, that even microscopic eyes are unable to discern it.

4. THE HUMOR OF PUN AND SLANG.—The third and cheapest, but assuredly also the most effective species of American humor, employs the pun, slang, and perversions of language of every sort, in addition to exaggeration. An occasional use of the pun is met with among the finest humorists; Thomas Hood owed a great

part of his effects to this unacquirable knack, and Oliver Wendell Holmes makes quite abundant use of it. But there are many well-known examples of American verse which present nothing but a play upon words, with no trace of inherent humor. The poem, *A Coat Tale*, by H. C. Dodge, one of the best-known humorists, is an example of this:

Old Tommy Taylor, tailor and
  Retailer, doth retail
Old army coats and coats-of-arms,
  And also coats of male.

With coats of paint he paints his coats-
  Of-arms above his door;
His motto is, "I sew the tares,
  Sow all may rip the more."

He is an artist tailor, and
  His artist work, he'll tell,
Is getting pay from customers
  Until he custom well.

Whene'er his sewing was a lot
  His owing was a little,
And though ill fits he never got,
  He often got a fit ill.

Of much the same sort is *The Ahkoond of Swat*, by George T. Lanigan, and many other

verses in the comic papers, *Life* and *Puck*, and in the New York *Sun*.

Perversions of speech based upon analogy and the like are not rare. A few stanzas from *Conjugal Conjugations*, by A. W. Bellow, will illustrate this:

Dear maid, let me speak
What I never yet spoke:
You have made my heart squeak,
As it never yet squoke,
And for sight of you both my eyes ache as they ne'er before oke.

With your voice my ears ring,
And a sweeter ne'er rung,
Like a bird's on the wing
When at morn it has wung.
And gladness to me it doth bring, such as never voice brung.

My feelings I'd write
But they cannot be wrote,
And who can indite
What was never indote!
And my love I hasten to plight—the first that I plote.

Another source of humor is the unrestrained language of the lower middle classes in the towns —slang. Oliver Wendell Holmes makes a

moderate use of it; "the young fellow they call John" in the "Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table" is very refreshing by the free bluntness of his speech. It is only the recent humorists who have elevated slang to the rank of an essential of their humor, as for instance George Ade in his widely read "Fables in Slang" (Chicago and New York, 1902). A recasting into the language of the educated would cause the humorous aroma to evaporate.

Artemus Ward, whose real name was Charles F. Browne (1834-1867), combined in his humorous lectures punning, perversion of speech, and slang. The following sketch, describing a visit among the Mormons, met with the greatest success:

BROTHER KIMBALL is a gay and festive cuss, of some seventy summers, or some 'er's there about. He has one thousand head of cattle and a hundred head of wives. He says they are awful eaters.

Mr. Kimball had a son, a lovely young man, who was married to ten interesting wives. But one day while he was absent from home these ten wives went out walking with a handsome young man, which so enraged Mr. Kimball's son—which made Mr. Kimball's son so jealous—that he shot himself with a horse-pistol.

The doctor who attended him—a very scientific man—informed me that the bullet entered the par-

allelogram of his diaphragmatic thorax, superincluding hemorrhage in the outer cuticle of his basilicon thaumaturgist. It killed him. I should have thought it would.

(*Soft Music*)

I hope this sad end will be a warning to all young wives who go out walking with handsome young men. Mr. Kimball's son is now no more. He sleeps beneath the cypress, the myrtle, and the willow. The music is a dirge by the eminent pianist for Mr. Kimball's son. He died by request.

I regret to say that efforts were made to make a Mormon of me while I was in Utah.

It was leap-year when I was there, and seventeen young widows, the wives of a deceased Mormon, offered me their hearts and hands. I called on them one day, and, taking their soft white hands in mine, which made eighteen hands altogether, I found them in tears, and I said, "Why is this thus? What is the reason of this thusness?"

They hove a sigh—seventeen sighs of different size. They said:

"Oh, soon thou wilt be gonested away!"

I told them that when I got ready to leave a place I wentested.

They said, "Doth not like us?"

I said, "I doth—I doth."

I also said, "I hope your intentions are honorable, as I am a lone child, my parents being far—far away."

Then they said, "Wilt not marry us?"

I said, "Oh, no, it cannot was!"

Again they asked me to marry them, and again I declined, when they cried, "Oh, cruel man! this is too much, Oh, too much!"

I told them that it was on account of the muchness that I declined. . . .

CHAPTER VIII

TALES OF THE SOIL

1. ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT.—The art of depicting everyday life, with its specific local color, was cultivated in Scotland with some success as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century. In America the realistic portrayal of provincial life and the use of dialect dates back to the beginnings of her imaginative literature; Catherine Maria Sedgwick's "A New England Tale," a story which is designated as the forerunner of the whole species, appeared in 1822. But as in England, where it required a master of the stamp of George Eliot to gain appreciation and popularity for this form of art, so in America it was not until the appearance of a creative writer of the abounding vigor, the sensitive temperament, and the varied experience of Bret Harte, that the literature of provincialism became an established fact. "The Luck of Roaring Camp" (1869), a bold piece of impressionist open-air painting of the life of the

California gold-seekers—a work of the most absolute directness, without perspective, almost without sifting of its material—marks the beginning not of American local-color literature in general, but of that relating to sections other than the Eastern States. For the student of comparative literature it is a particularly noteworthy fact that the pioneer of provincial realism, this very Bret Harte, was a poet of the first water, a littérateur of fastidiously delicate taste who really felt himself exiled, as it were, among the untamed children of nature in the California gold-diggings. He was delighted with the offer of a chair of modern literature (1870); he left America without regret when he was appointed consul at Krefeld (1878); and in London, which he chose as his permanent abode in 1885, he consorted with the best society. His novels and tales, whose substance is taken from the Sierras, were, with the exception of two, "The Luck of Roaring Camp" and "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," all written from memory.

Another pioneer of realistic local fiction was Edward Eggleston (1837-1902), whose "Hoosier Schoolmaster" appeared in 1871. In this first effort Eggleston, who had made Taine's theory

of environment his own, describes his own experiences; in conscious contrast with the method of idealizing embellishment. It reminds the German reader of Pestalozzi's narrative writings, and still more of Jeremias Gotthelf. And now there follow in rapid succession the works of the great American masters of local fiction, almost every state being represented by a number of story-tellers.

But brief as is the span of time that separates us from Bret Harte, the development of this species of American art has been extraordinary —almost as remarkable as that of the society depicted. The writers of the seventies and eighties content themselves with rough outlines; they give to happenings and descriptions the priority over psychological analysis. With Bret Harte color and mood, with Eggleston environment, are the most essential things; the style is as direct and simple as the human nature. The farther we get away from these beginnings, the finer do we find the lines, the more careful the psychology, the more distinguished the style. George Washington Cable (born 1844) is already far removed from the style of Bret Harte and Eggleston; the whole distance between 1869 and the close of the cen-

tury is to be seen in James Lane Allen (born 1849) who must on that account be presented somewhat more fully.

The work upon which his reputation chiefly rests is "The Choir Invisible," which appeared in 1897. The title itself shows that a poet with the literary spirit is addressing fastidious tastes. What does it suggest to a simple mind? Assuredly something ethereal, something perhaps from the other shore, spirits or angels. The book, however, does not concern itself in the slightest with the world from which "no traveller returns." On the contrary it is a presentiment of the most stirring life imaginable, the heroic age of the pioneers of Kentucky. And the misleading title, a concession to the learned snobbery of our time, which acts as if it had read everything and forgotten nothing, is taken from a poem of George Eliot's:

O may I join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence: live
In pulses stirred to generosity,
In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
For miserable aims that end with self. . . .

The invisible choir of the title is the band of heroes whose names are not recorded by history,

and yet who in their quiet way have made America the grandiose spectacle which it is today. A historical novel, then? No; but a little heroic epic in prose, a brief episode in the life of two noble beings, just as befits an epic, the romance of two strong natures who are too proud to steal their happiness, and not modern enough to relegate the ideas of mine and thine to the lumber room. The single man and the married woman remain separated; that is the whole extent of their defeat. Otherwise they are victorious all along the line; victorious over wilderness and savages, over malice and stupidity, over temptation and their own hearts. The book exhales youth and strength. The story opens with a half-tempting, half-chilling day of early spring, and like a northern May, which promises all yet withholds all, does the whole book affect our spirit.

The strongest side of the American writers of local fiction—in contrast with the great cosmopolitan novelists of America like Howells and James—is their narrow horizon, their quite childlike, unsubdued nature; it gives them a spiritual kinship to the naïve poets of the ancient world. Allen's "Choir Invisible" is not the first or the only work of this kind, but it is the

finest; the strong heart of a poet finds expression in it. We have, above all, the deep attachment to the soil, which envelops us like the murmur of the woods. There is in reality nothing special about the soil of Kentucky; neither glaciers nor geysers, neither canyons nor silver or gold. Only an undulating landscape with a splendid robe of rich verdure; that is all. But the eye of a poet rests lovingly upon this spot of ordinary earth, and behold, it is sanctified and transfigured for us. And indeed the characters of the story are as everyday as the soil. One almost hesitates to say what the vocation of the hero is. He is a schoolmaster, a young fellow, poor as Job, who has been thrown upon his own resources from childhood, and strives withal unswervingly for high objects, as the flame is drawn upward:

"Sorely as I have struggled, I have yet to encounter that common myth of weak men, an insurmountable barrier. The imperfection of our lives—what is it but the imperfection of our planning and doing? Shattered ideals—what hand shatters them but one's own? I declare to you," says the schoolmaster to the woman kindred to him in spirit, "at this moment, standing here in the clear light of my own past, that

I firmly believe I shall be what I will, that I shall have what I want, and that I shall now go on rearing the structure of my life to the last detail, just as I have long planned it."

That is the genuine American spirit, of the stamp that made of a rail-splitter a president of the Republic. Our schoolmaster, too, climbs the rungs of the social ladder to the top; he is one of the invisible choir that unlocked the West of the vast American continent.

Strong-willed, iron men and tender, adorable women—these characters give a peculiar stamp to James Lane Allen's art. In him we should look in vain for those traits which are apt to be regarded, by persons who get their impressions from newspaper reading only, as typically American. What a pleasant surprise to find in this provincial the most delicate shades and finest nuances, maiden-like reserve, almost courtly taste. One is struck already in "The Choir Invisible" with the austere reticence that characterizes all well-bred descendants of the Puritans; in the second masterpiece, discretion is carried to the very limits of possibility. The book is called "A Kentucky Cardinal," and the title is a conscious ambiguity, a playful misleading of the reader. For it is not a dignitary

of the church that is meant, but a shy warbler of the family of the *Fringillidæ*, whom the Americans term the Virginia Cardinal on account of its scarlet plumage; and this warbler is, of course, not the real subject of the idyl but its symbol and culminating point: like the falcon in the famous Italian tale, it brings the lovers together. And wherefore the necessity for such an unusual mediator? Because these American provincials use language to conceal their feelings. Man and woman revel in the pains and ecstasies of the unexpressed. They chat with each other in the most confidential spirit as long as they confine themselves to half words, to intimations and enigmas. If the man begins to speak in distinct language of the real feelings of his heart, she vanishes at once like a shadow. But she is, in spite of her superabundance of wit, a creature of warm blood and most captivating womanliness, a combination that has reached an ideal perfection in the American woman of the Southwest, if the literary artists of that section may be believed. They all lie prostrate at the feet of their ideal. Reverence for woman can no farther go.

2. NORTH AND SOUTH.—The contrast between the stubborn-soiled North, settled by Puritanic

provincials, and the luxuriant South, taken possession of by the Cavalier families, finds expression not in history alone. In literature, too, the productions of New England are sharply differentiated from those of Virginia or Carolina. The story writers, Margaret Deland (born 1862) and Mary E. Wilkins (born 1862), give us a picture of the life, feelings, and thoughts of the North in their most intimate details. It is worth while to reproduce the picture in miniature.

In the concerns of everyday life, in their dwellings, their eating and drinking, in social intercourse, in their beliefs and thoughts, in love and hate, the natives pictured in the tales of village life give the impression of fossils belonging to a long-vanished past.

The New England village is distinguished from the all-levelling plutocratic city primarily by its aristocracy of birth, its family pride. In the country back of New York and Boston ancestors still count. The almighty dollar of the self-made man tells, but only in the second or third generation. The definition given of a gentleman there is rather pretentious. A gentleman should know the given name and the vocation of his male ancestors at least to the fifth generation; naturally, the vocation must

be such that its mention in good society is not embarrassing. Among those ancestors one may have been a member of the Provincial Council of his Majesty, another a governor, a third a doctor of divinity, a fourth a member of Congress, if possible of the time of tasselled riding-boots. A gentleman should have family portraits, books with the names of their one-time owners under the device "Hic liber est meus," Hogarth's engravings in the original edition, Pope's works in fifteen volumes, family silver, and if possible a family ghost. Gentlemen with such a splendid equipment are naturally rare specimens, but the right sort of "family" has one or other of these distinctions blazoned upon its invisible coat-of-arms. The doctor of divinity is particularly highly prized as an ancestor; the clergyman stands even to-day at the head of the aristocracy of a village, and he likewise represents the conservative principle. Dr. Howe, the minister of the sleepy village to which Margaret Deland's "John Ward, Preacher" transports us, is proud of the elegant tranquillity of the little community in which his father and grandfather passed their lives comfortably before him; when the commercial and industrial elements contrive a plan to entice the railroad to

the dead-and-alive village, he interposes with his aristocratic authority. The workmen had already cut into the greensward, the company had plunged into expenditures; but the "families" do not feel any need of contact with new and doubtful elements. So the wounds are healed once more which pickaxes and spade had inflicted upon the ground, and pink clover exhales its fragrance where it had been planned to lay rails and destroy the idyl.

Self-sufficiency and isolation is another characteristic of the New England village: every village is a little entity complete in itself. Division of labor is hardly known there even by name. Like their primitive Puritan ancestors, who cleared the virgin forest, drove out the redskins and the wild animals, and with the same hand knew how to handle the rifle, the carpenter's hammer, and the plow—and, in case of necessity, the needle—the village inhabitants of the New England of to-day are skilled in all kinds of manual work and are fond of it. All the needs of material civilization are supplied by a few hands; industrial improvements, the conveniences of modern invention, are proudly ignored. Barnabas Thayer, in "Pembroke," plows in the primitive fashion of his grandfather;

the housewives bake in brick ovens; for clothes and linens the fundamental raw material only is bought; the women spin, weave, sew, knit; for such necessaries not a penny passes out of the house. The village has a merchant, for sugar and coffee are not produced in New England, but in this limited sphere of village commerce the oldest form of trade, exchange, still survives. Rebecca Thayer is in need of sugar for domestic use; hence she counts out two dozen eggs, and William Berry, the merchant, weighs two and a half pounds of sugar for her in return—exactly according to the current rate.

At the same time a certain luxury is developed which does not accord well with the Puritan sobriety in other directions. The women dress in silks and fine furs, the minister's daughter possesses a small fortune in laces. The dwellings are spacious and comfortable; a separate bedroom for each person is a matter of course with a people who entertain so great a respect for individuality and all its rights. The learned callings enjoy the highest esteem; for they, too, are represented in the village. Besides the doctor of divinity there is the doctor of medicine and the lawyer; and the three representatives of university culture—the lawyer, to be

sure, has not always the benefit of a university education, and his professional knowledge, in England and America, is mostly of a routine character—live side by side on the most amicable terms. Mutual entertaining, whist parties, bring variety and a gentle excitement into the drowsy monotony; when the children grow up, they marry among themselves. Unhappy elective difficulties with a tragic sequel are handed down like earthquakes and wars from generation to generation.

All foreigners and persons of alien religious belief are barbarians in the eyes of the autochthons of New England. The Irish Catholics, who form so large a fraction of the population of most of the great cities, and who by their spirit and activity have contributed so largely to the progress of the commerce and industry of their adopted country, are a socially insignificant element in the villages. Their creed is conceived by the Presbyterians and Methodists as something monstrous, unspeakable, hardly imaginable. The Methodist preacher in Harold Frederic's "Illumination," Theron Ware, has occasionally seen an Irish servant and Irish bricklayers, but in his imagination, which is the imagination of his parents and his co-religionists,

the Irish are to blame for the drunkenness, the vice, the crimes, the political corruption of the American cities, and he looks upon their "false, idolatrous religion" as the primal source of these noxious things. When this autochthon accidentally becomes a witness of how a dying Irishman receives extreme unction from the hands of a Catholic priest, this one scene, which thrills his inmost soul, makes him skeptical of his past, of his faith, of himself. In reality the New England villages are by their religion far more closely related to the first half of the seventeenth than to the end of the nineteenth century. The inexorable Calvinist view of life which the first Puritans brought over with them to America in the *Mayflower* has been maintained by the Presbyterians and Methodists in all its rigor to the present day, and the theory is carried out to its minutest practical consequences. The word of the Bible, in its naked, sober significance, is the standard for faith and thought, for life and death. "Go to the Bible!" That is the first and last resource of the inhabitants of Ashurst, Pembroke, Tyre, Octavius, Lockhaven, or whatever else may be the names of the villages of which Margaret Deland, Mary E. Wilkins, and Harold Frederic give us convincing,

because concordant, pictures. The very names are reminders of the times of Habakkuk: Stand-fast-in-the-faith, Destroy-the-enemy.

Men and women are no longer given such significantly picturesque names; the martial spirit no longer exists, nor is there any need of it. But of all the sources of name-giving which we meet with in England and in American cities, there is no trace in the New England village. History, fiction, kinship, the calendar, whim—the place of all these is taken by the Book of Books. The firstborn is put into the arms of the happy mother—what should it be called? The young woman doubtless cherishes a secret wish, the name of her favorite hero would be infinitely pleasant to her; but the wish of the mother is not taken into account. Go to the Bible! The hero of the village tale, therefore, is called Barnabas, Caleb, Cephas, Ephraim, Levi, Erastus, Silas; the women answer to such names as Deborah, Rebecca, Sarah. Richard, William, Charlotte, Rose, are modern exceptions in the Biblical company.

Hell and damnation are there not abstract articles of faith, but ever-present, effective moral forces; as in our life propriety and the police. The drunkard who mercilessly maltreats wife

and child, unashamed before himself and the world, trembles like an aspen leaf as soon as John Ward, the preacher, reminds him of hell. When, for the sake of his young wife, John omits the mention of hell and everlasting damnation from one of his Sunday sermons, he is overwhelmed with reproaches by the wife of that drunkard. Without the weekly reminder, Tom cannot stand up straight for a day. In Harold Frederic's story, likewise, the new preacher gets a sound lecture at the hands of one of the elders. Our congregation, says the good man, treads the narrow path that leads to life in a gentle and humble spirit; there are some churches where the minister says nothing about hell and damnation, but we are people of the old stamp, we want to hear about hell, about fire and brimstone, where the wicked burn for ever and ever. The pious have not many pleasures in the villages of New England; woe to him who would try to rob them of their chief consolation, the eternal damnation of the ungodly!

The English Sunday is regarded with shuddering on the continent as a horrible example of Puritan self-torture; the absence of theatrical performances and concerts seems an incomprehensible barbarism to the French and Germans.

But what is the ennui of an English Sunday in comparison with the Sabbath of the American Presbyterians and Methodists? Divine service three times, with three sermons, interdiction of any reading which might in any way be termed amusing, stale bread, old milk—the cows are milked, but the pious do not allow anything to be brought into the house on Sunday—these are the joys that distinguish the Lord's day from the work days. In former times this kind of Sunday was general throughout the land. Oliver Wendell Holmes recalls them with shuddering from his earliest childhood; and we believe him literally when he relates that the funereal countenances exhibited by the reverend gentlemen on Sundays contributed not a little to render distasteful to him the ministerial calling to which he had been destined by his father. This sort of Sunday quiet has by this time disappeared from the towns; in the villages, however, it has survived with all its terrors. Harold Frederic's preacher gets no fresh milk on Sundays, and well-meaning people impress it upon his young wife that she must not again appear in church on Sunday with flowers in her hat.

This inflexible orthodoxy is connected with the most prominent trait of the inhabitants of

the New England village. They are hard and reserved to the extreme—nearly all of them characters without a trace of temperament or imagination. The indomitable determination of the Puritans, which humbled and crushed kings and nations, which in the course of two centuries created in a wilderness of wood and plain a civilization which Europe required two thousand years to build, has survived as a heritage to the people of Pembroke and Tyre to the present day. If they undertake a thing they carry it out or die; if they have said a thing it stands, even if the persons or things for whose sake it was said demand a retraction. What has once become a matter of faith is not shaken by a thousand arguments; a conviction is not abandoned even should it crush and destroy. The old martyr blood, which flowed in the days of Mary, Elizabeth, and Charles I., still runs in the veins of the descendants of the Puritans. Deborah Thayer drives her eldest son from the house because he leaves his affianced on account of a quarrel with his future father-in-law; she does not like the girl, but she hates the injustice that is done her, and with a breaking heart casts off her firstborn because her conscience demands it. Her second son is sickly from his

birth; he is somewhat humored, therefore, as the doctor has positively forbidden any sort of chastisement. Deborah, however, is embittered by the disobedience and stubbornness of the eldest son; and so, when the sickly younger son is also about to offer opposition to his mother's will, she fetches a stick. She knows that she is imperilling his life by corporal punishment, and he is now her only child; but it is better that he should be dead than wicked, better that his body suffer than his immortal soul. And the boy dies, almost under her hands. Martyrs to their Puritan loyalty to conviction are also the chief figures in Margaret Deland's book, "John Ward, Preacher." He adheres firmly to the orthodox creed and preaches hell and damnation in the Calvinist manner. Helen, his wife, is not to be won over to that barbaric belief—she leaves her home, therefore, and the lives of two choice spirits are ruined for nothing.

3. HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.—The distinguishing characteristic of life in the Southern States was negro slavery, and it finds expression, naturally, not in politics and history alone, but in literature as well. The intercourse of the whites and blacks, the influence of the negroes upon the feelings and thoughts of the Caucasians,

have been depicted a thousand times—with or without a purpose; the classical work of that species was, and has remained to the present day, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," which appeared in 1852.

All historians, whether they belong to the victorious North, like Harriet Beecher Stowe, or to the vanquished South, agree in thinking that "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was a leading factor in bringing about the Civil War, which rent the Union from 1861 to 1865; that the abolition of slavery was in a great measure owing to that remarkable book. And yet to-day, if one must tell the truth, it is but slightly valued, not only in the outside world, but in the United States itself; and the new generation speaks of "Uncle Tom," with the superior air of ignorant youth, as an ephemeral political production.

The fact is that Harriet Beecher Stowe has insofar shared the fate of many authors who have become famous over night that posterity has sought to counterbalance the former blind overestimate by exaggerated criticism, by petty hair-splitting; but she comes off far better than many of her fellow-sufferers, for her popularity has outlived her fame. Directly after its appearance "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was sold by

hundreds of thousands, translated into all civilized tongues, presented in dramatic form on every stage. That honor has fallen to the share of other books as well. But while other celebrities of the day, of that and more recent times —*nomina sunt odiosa*—are by this time forgotten, the demand for "Uncle Tom's Cabin" in American circulating libraries continues almost unabated year after year. This perennial youth alone argues against the assertion that it is nothing but a sensational blood-and-thunder novel, devoid of all artistic objectivity, extravagant in its heaping up of atrocities, puerile in its crude contrasts of black and white, devils and angels, and marred by its thickly laid-on morality and its lengthy sermons. Neither the former lauding to the skies nor the depreciation of to-day is deserved.

Let it be clearly understood, in the first place, that Harriet Beecher Stowe was a born story-teller, like Fanny Burney and Jane Austen, like George Sand, like Clara Viebig. As to the measure of her talent, there may be a difference of opinion; that her talent is essentially artistic, that the impulse toward the portrayal of character was stronger in her than the inclination to instruct and edify, she has shown unmistakably

in her later works, in the descriptions of the life of the Puritans in New England. There it is all character study, without the shadow of a purpose, and precisely there does she show herself strongest and most self-confident. "Uncle Tom's Cabin," in spite of its forming the zenith of the authoress's life, must in justice be estimated as what it was—the first literary attempt of a woman born, bred, almost grown old, in a clerical environment. Harriet was forty years old when her first work appeared in *The National Era.* If the novel contained no characters but Marie St. Claire and Ophelia we should recognize the hand of an inspired creative artist, for they are two consummate portraits.

Less justified still than the reproach of didacticism is the assertion that in "Uncle Tom's Cabin" Mrs. Stowe lowers the art of the novelist to the level of the preacher's pulpit. This can only be maintained by those who have not the remotest conception of the life, the feelings and thoughts, of the Anglo-American race. What appears to us as the preacher's tone is to them a sustained style, what disgusts us as unctuousness is to them an expression of religious emotion. It was simply impossible for Harriet *Beecher* Stowe to give an artistic reproduction of

Uncle Tom's environment without emphasizing as forcibly as possible the godliness and religiosity of all the better elements. The author of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was a liberal in the broadest sense of the word; all the freer in that she had thrown off her spiritual fetters herself; a woman of spirit, of modern culture. Whoever repeats the judgment of her pious didacticism current among ill-informed writers on American literature has evidently read none of her other books, in which the feeling for environment and the subtle psychology remind one strongly of George Eliot. Read the following clear-cut sayings, and see how remote Mrs. Stowe was from unction and cant:

"He was one of those men willing to play with any charming woman the game of those navigators who give to simple natives glass beads and feathers in return for gold and diamonds; to accept from a woman her heart's blood in return for such odds, ends, and clippings as he could afford her from the serious ambitions of life."

"If women have one weakness more marked than another, it is toward veneration. They are born worshippers—makers of silver shrines for some divinity or other, which, of course, they always think fell straight from heaven."

"He gave only the results of thought, not its incipient processes; and the consequence was that few could follow him."

"There are some people who receive from nature as a gift a sort of graceful facility of sympathy by which they incline to take on, for the time being, the sentiments and opinions of those with whom they converse, as the chameleon was fabled to change its hue with every surrounding. Such are often supposed to be wilfully acting a part, as exerting themselves to flatter and deceive, when in fact they are only framed so sensitive to the sphere of mental emanation which surrounds others that it would require an exertion *not* in some measure to harmonize with it."

"No moral argument, since the world began, ever prevailed over 25 per cent. profit."

"Our minister was one of those cold, clear-cut, polished crystals that are formed in the cooling-down of society, after it has been melted and purified by a great enthusiasm."

"Your Yankee has such a sense of value, that, if he pays a man to thrash him, he wants to be thrashed thoroughly."

As the daughter of a divine, Harriet understood the inmost soul of Puritan theology, and

we are consequently indebted to her for a number of keen and illuminating sayings regarding the Puritan spirit.

Jonathan Rossiter's confession of unbelief is the result of long and varied experience in many climes, of a rare self-knowledge and penetrating analytical thought. One need not hesitate to compare the author of that piece of literature with a master like George Eliot.

"Uncle Tom's Cabin" was a wonderful hit, but it was not an accident. Only now, after a lapse of sixty years, are we in a position to judge how much of its tremendous success was due to a happy conjuncture of circumstances, how much to intrinsic merit. We see now that Harriet not only had as clear and correct a conception of the negro question as her greatest contemporaries, but that she penetrated the future with veritably prophetic genius. She divined, what escaped men of the keenest vision, that the negroes themselves were not ripe for freedom; that the time immediately succeeding emancipation would be more dreadful than slavery; she felt that the negroes faced years of the sorest trials; that a purifying educational process would be necessary in order to develop these semi-animals into whole human beings.

Who was to take upon himself this formidable task? Not the negro, but the mulatto. I have remarked before that two of the characters in "Uncle Tom's Cabin" are portraits, Marie St. Claire and Ophelia; an essential addition must be made to that observation. The mulatto, George Harris, son of a white father and a negro mother, is evidently carefully drawn from nature. And to my mind this Harris, despite the title of the book, is the centre of interest of the whole story; and indeed it is with this character that the conclusion of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" is concerned. Uncle Tom, the full-blooded negro, dies; he succumbs to the torture inflicted by his fiendish master; Harris, on the contrary, escapes and triumphs over his tormentor. This contrast is significant, it is a fundamental idea of the book.

The pure negro, childish, with few wants, easily satisfied, trampled upon for thousands of years by alien races, would never have brought the unspeakable sufferings of slavery to the light of day. The defenders of the system had a shadow of right on their side when they pointed to the exuberant cheerfulness of the negroes, to their unfailing vitality, to their affection for their owners, to the indisputable fact that many

of them would not accept the proffered freedom, assigning the Biblical reason, "I love my master."

The crying injustice of slavery was first felt and expressed in all its enormity by colored persons of mixed blood, like Harris; the blood of a masterful nature inherited from the father rebelled against a slave's fate, and was not to be pacified either by kind treatment or by the lash.

"My master!" cried George, when, out of sheer malice, his owner degrades him from a mechanic to a field-hand, "and who made him my master? That is what I think of—what right has he to me? I'm a man as much as he is. I'm a better man than he is. I know more about business than he does; I am a better manager than he is; I can read better than he can; I can write a better hand—and I've learned it all myself, and no thanks to him—I've learned it in spite of him; and now what right has he to make a dray-horse of me—to take me from things I can do, do better than he can, and put me to work that any horse can do? . . . I have been careful, and I have been patient, but it's growing worse and worse; flesh and blood can't bear it any longer. . . ."

And this George Harris, when he attains

freedom and a competence, devotes himself to the service of the negro, in spite of the fact that he could pass for a Spaniard or an Italian, so little characteristic of the black are his features.

"I feel somewhat at a loss as to my future course," he writes to a friend. "True, as you have said to me, I might mingle in the circles of the whites in this country, my shade of color is so slight and that of my wife and family scarce perceptible. Well, perhaps on sufferance, I might. But, to tell you the truth, I have no wish to.

"My sympathies are not for my father's race, but for my mother's. To him I was no more than a fine dog or horse; to my poor heart-broken mother I was a *child;* and though I never saw her, after the cruel sale that separated us, till she died, yet I *know* she always loved me dearly. I know it by my own heart. When I think of all she suffered, of my own early sufferings, of the distresses and struggles of my heroic wife, of my sister—sold in the New Orleans slave-market—though I hope to have no unchristian sentiments, yet I may be excused for saying I have no wish to pass for an American, or to identify myself with them.

"It is with the oppressed, enslaved African

race that I cast in my lot; and, if I wished anything, I would wish myself two shades darker rather than one lighter."

How these words written sixty years ago have been verified! If George Harris was then a creature of the imagination, he has to-day found embodiment in the negro leader W. E. Burghard Du Bois. One must read what William Archer has to say of that eminent man,* to see how profoundly Harriet Beecher Stowe had penetrated into the heart of the negro problem.

4. JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS.—The soul of the American negro has been most vividly presented to us by Joel Chandler Harris (1848-1906), the author of "Uncle Remus." Uncle Remus is the old negro who relates stories about the fox and the rabbit to the son of the house.

In Puritan households the negroes represent the natural, or, as theologians term it, the "creature" element in the family; the children always sought refuge from parental chastisement in Juno's or Cæsar's loving and unquestioningly wide-opened arms. It is to this loyal relationship between the slaves and the children of the house that we owe that wonderful children's book, "Uncle Remus."

*"Through Afro-America," London, 1911.

"Brer Fox" and "Brer Rabbit" live in a constant feud, and the fox always gets the worst of it. As an illustration let me reproduce the delicious story of the "Tar-Baby":

THE WONDERFUL TAR-BABY STORY

"Didn't the fox never catch the rabbit, Uncle Remus?" asked the little boy the next evening.

"He come mighty nigh it, honey, sho's you bawn —Brer Fox did. One day atter Brer Rabbit fool 'im wid dat calamus root, Brer Fox went ter wuk en got 'im som tar, en mix it wid some turkentine, en fix up a contrapshun what he call a Tar-Baby, an he tuk dish yer Tar-Baby an he sot 'er in de big road, en den he lay off in de bushes fer ter see what de news waz gwineter be. And he didn't hatter wait long, nudder, kaze bimeby here come Brer Rabbit pacin' down de road—lippity-clippity clippity-lippity—dez ez sassy ez a jay-bird. Brer Fox, he lay low. Brer Rabbit come prancin' 'long twel he spy de Tar-Baby, en den he fotch up on his behime-legs like he wuz 'stonished. De Tar-Baby, she sot dar, she did, en Brer Fox, he lay low.

"'Mawnin' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee—'nice wedder dis mawnin',' sezee.

"Tar-Baby ain't sayin' nuthin,' en Brer Fox, he lay low.

"'How duz yo' sym'toms seem ter segashuate?' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee.

"Brer Fox, he wink his eye slow, en lay low, en de Tar-Baby, she ain't sayin' nuthin.'

"'How you come on, den? Is you deaf?' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, 'Kaze if you is, I kin holler louder,' sezee.

"Tar-Baby stay still, en Brer Fox, he lay low.

"'Youer stuck up, dat's what you is,' says Brer Rabbit, sezee, 'en I gwineter kyore you, dat's what I'm gwineter do,' sezee.

"Brer Fox, he sorter chuckle in his stummuck, he did, but Tar-Baby ain't sayin' nuthin'.

"'I'm gwineter learn you howter talk ter 'spectubble fokes ef hit's de las' ack,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee. 'Ef you don't take off dat hat en tell me howdy, I'm gwineter bus you wide open,' sezee.

"Tar-Baby stay still, en Brer Fox, he lay low.

"Brer Rabbit keep on axin' 'im, en de Tar-Baby, she keep on sayin' nuthin', twel presently Brer Rabbit draw back wid his fis', he did, en blip he tuck 'er side er de head. Right dar's whar he broke his merlasses jug. His fis' stuck, en he can't pull loose. De tar hilt 'im. But Tar-Baby, she stay still, en Brer Fox, he lay low.

"'Ef you don't lemme loose, I'll knock you agin',' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, en wid dat he fotch 'er a wipe wid de unner han', en dat stuck. Tar-Baby, she ain't sayin' nuthin,' an Brer Fox, he lay low.

"'Tu'n me loose, 'fore I kick de natal stuffin' outen you,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, but de Tar-Baby, she ain't sayin' nuthin'. She des hilt on, en den Brer Rabbit he lose de use er his feet in de same way. Brer Fox, he lay low. Den Brer Rabbit he squall out det ef der Tar-Baby don't tu'n 'im loose, he butt 'er

cranksided. En den he butted, en his head got stuck. Den Brer Fox, he sa'ntered fort', lookin' des ez innercent ez wunner yo' mammy's mockin' birds.

"'Howdy, Brer Rabbit,' sez Brer Fox, sezee. 'You look sorter stuck up dis mawnin',' sezee, en den he rolled on de groun', en laft twel he couldn't laff no mo'. 'I speck you'll take dinner wid me dis time, Brer Rabbit. I done laid in some calamus root, en I ain't gwineter take no skuse,' sez Brer Fox, sezee."

Here Uncle Remus paused, and drew a two-pound yam out of the ashes.

"Did the fox eat the rabbit?" asked the little boy to whom the story had been told.

"Dat's all de fur de tale goes," replied the old man. "He mout, en den again he moutent. Some say Jedge B'ar come 'long en loosed him—some say he didn't. I hear Miss Sally callin'. You better run 'long."

To investigate the sources of the stories of the fox and the rabbit is a task for the student of folklore. The layman is struck with the idea that in reversing the rôles usually assigned to the two animals in other animal stories and fables, the oppressed negro race takes its harmless revenge by representing the strong and unscrupulous creature as a victim of the weaker one. Connoisseurs admire the wonderful fidelity with

which the pronunciation, the vocabulary, and the sentence structure of the negro are reproduced in "Uncle Remus."

This little book, which in America is as widely read as "Uncle Tom's Cabin," was followed by several sequels: "Nights with Uncle Remus" (1883) and "Uncle Remus and His Friends" (1893).

The seamy side of negro emancipation is brought out by Harris in the sketch "Free Joe." The negro, Joe, was set free by his abolitionist master. At first he was delighted with his unaccustomed liberty; gradually, however, he realized his peculiar position: he became conscious that in spite of his freedom he was more helpless than a slave. Since he had no owner, everybody was his master. He noticed that he was an object of suspicion; therefore all his little resources—and how pitifully slender they were —were employed to obtain not friendliness and esteem but toleration; all his efforts were centred upon mitigating the circumstances which made his condition so much worse than that of the other negroes, the negroes who had friends because they had masters.

Very recently Lucy Pratt, in her "Ezekiel," has depicted with the deepest sympathy the

nature of the negro child. Stephen Collins Foster (1826-1864) likewise sought to give expression to the inner life of the negro. He wrote and set to music more than a hundred and twenty-five negro songs. Of these, *The Old Folks at Home*, so full of tenderness and pathos, is the most widely known. Whether these songs, which have become popular among the whites, really represent the negro soul is a question which the negroes alone can answer.

THE END

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The publishers wish THE AMERICAN BOOKS to be written by the best men, and to this end they seek the widest publicity for the plan. They will be glad to receive suggestions as to appropriate titles for inclusion in the series and will welcome authoritative MSS submitted from any quarter. In particular they submit the plan to the consideration of the American colleges where the problems of the country are being studied. In science, literature, business, politics, in the arts of war and the arts of peace, the publishers will seek writers who have stood for fearless achievement or equally fearless failure, who will build up A LIBRARY OF GOOD CITIZENSHIP.

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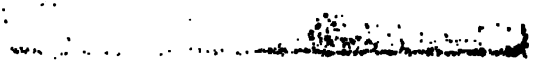

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